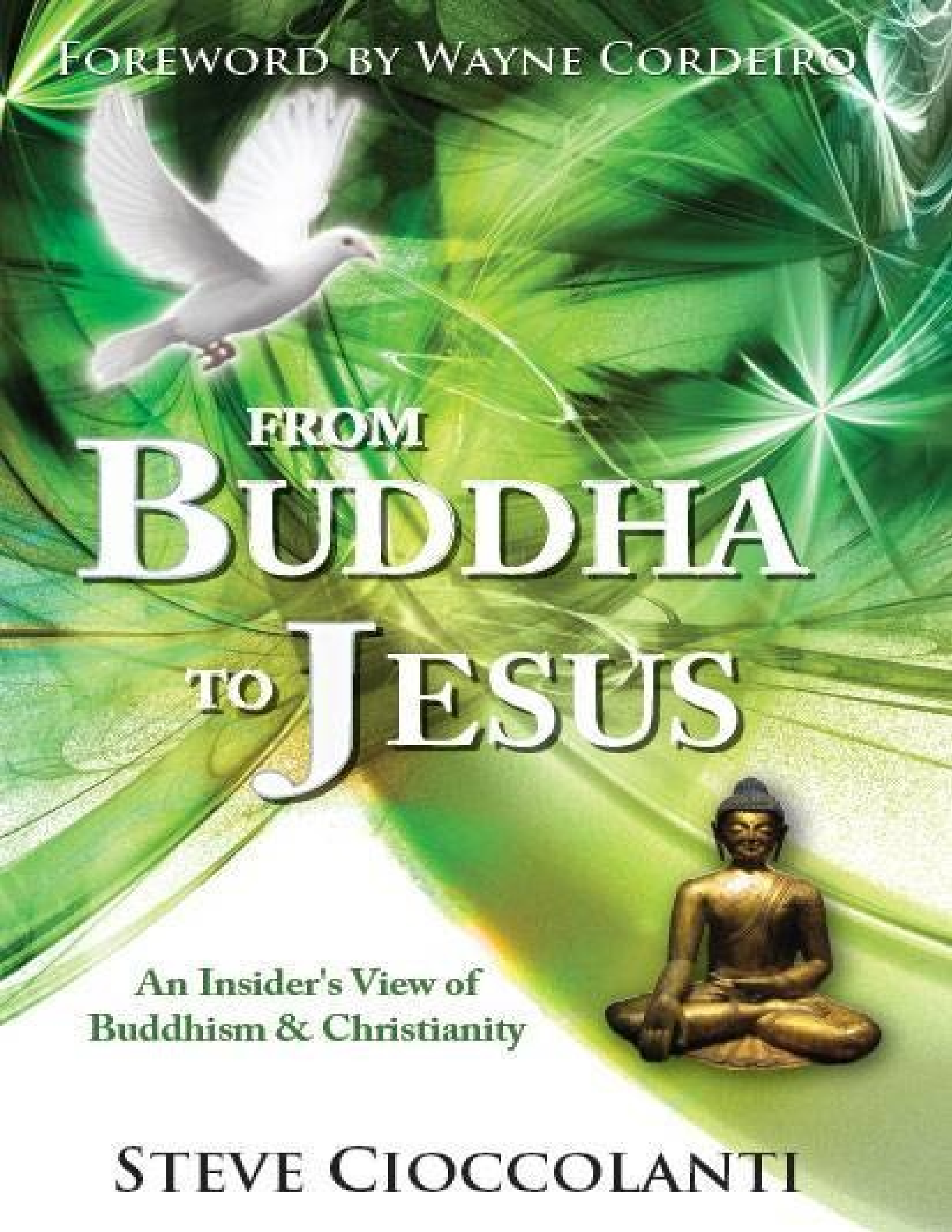
Foreword by Wayne Cordeiro



FROM BUDDHA TO JESUS

An Insider's View of Buddhism & Christianity

Steve Cioccolanti

WHAT LEADERS ARE SAYING…

"In his well-written and researched book 'From Buddha to Jesus' Steve has placed a valuable witnessing tool in the hands of the local church. I strongly recommend his book and suggest that anyone who comes in contact with Eastern religions should read it and have the information readily available."

COL STRINGER
Best-Selling Author & President of ICFM Australia "This book has many great insights in it… I would use it for our Bible College students."

DR. WAYNE CORDEIRO
Pastor of 10,000+ member church in Hawaii "Upon reading 'From Buddha to Jesus,' we were challenged, felt better equipped with the right information, and in many ways….corrected. We didn't realize that we had so many misconceptions concerning Buddhism. Nor did we know that there are so many teachings of Buddhism that could actually assist us in presenting to Buddhists their need of Jesus as Savior."

TONY & PATSY CAMENETI
Directors of RHEMA Australia, missionaries to Singapore & Italy "Buddhism is a mystery to most Australians, yet increasing numbers of Australians are investigating it as an option for faith. Steve Cioccolanti has done us all a service by making the essence of Buddhism accessible to all of us. This book will be an increasingly important resource for those desiring to lift up Jesus, The Light, in the understanding of those who find themselves impressed by Buddha, the 'enlightened one'."

ALLAN MEYER
Senior Minister of Careforce Church, Mt. Evelyn "'From Buddha to Jesus' is definitely a book worth reading and passing on to other Christians. It has been written with the view of helping Christians to more effectively reach Buddhists with the Gospel by understanding our common ground with them. It gives invaluable insights into why Buddhists believe and practice the way they do. Thus

equipped, the Christian is better positioned to share the Gospel with Buddhists wisely and strategically, even as Paul did with the Athenians in Acts 17.

The book has also helped clear misconceptions of Buddhism that are prevalent in the Western society including my own misperceptions of reincarnation. It has given me invaluable insight into Buddhism in ways I had not hitherto attained from other books on world religions. The book is written in a very easy-to-read style with interesting anecdotes to illustrate teaching points. I highly recommend to every Christian both the book and its author."

PEGGY ONG Church Elder of Full Gospel Assembly Melbourne "A truly enlightening and informative book on Buddhism with many references and comparisons to Christianity. This book is a useful tool to reach not only Buddhists with the truth but many others confused in the plethora of religions."

TOM INGLIS
Founder of Psalmody, former Music Director of RHEMA South Africa "The author not only reveals the *true* teachings of Buddha, but superbly teaches many Biblical truths which are so vital for victorious Christian living."

DAVID PEARCE
Missionary to Tibet "As well as learning so much, I believe Steve has a beautiful gift of expressing language... his writing is so clear and easy to comprehend it may well become a teaching, training, educational manual in libraries, schools and colleges throughout the world. I am praying for God's favor on this important piece of literature."

DAVID BOX
Property & Project Manager of Destiny Church, Melbourne

From Buddha

To

Jesus

An Insider's View of

Buddhism & Christianity Steve Cioccolanti Foreword by Dr. Wayne Cordeiro From Buddha to Jesus: An Insider's View of Buddhism & Christianity by Steve Cioccolanti Published by Sweet Life International Pty. Ltd.

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FOREWORDS You have in your hands a groundbreaking book, one that will challenge you to rethink our faith and how it can reach those whom others have overlooked.

I was raised in Hawaii, a blending of the East and West. My mother was for many years of her life a Buddhist. My father was Catholic, so I grew up confused! I was in caught between the two cultures and the two beliefs of those I loved.

As I came to know Christ in my late teenage years, I developed a heart to reach those of other faiths. I quickly learned that the first step to that goal was not necessarily sharing the Four Spiritual Laws or by giving them a copy of the New Testament. Rather, it was to understand their perspective and loving each one as a person for whom Christ died.

Having read Steve Cioccolanti's courageous work, I was challenged afresh and stirred in my heart to now confidently take the next step in reaching Buddhists with the Gospel. It teaches the reader how with understanding and context, we can build Goodwill, which one day will open a doorway for the Good News!

Steve Cioccolanti is a sincere follower of Christ with an unusual insight into the Buddhist mind. His background and context lends to a broad understanding that no causal college can bring to any avid student of life. You will hear his compassion as well as his comprehension for those who have been raised within generations of Buddhist traditions and beliefs. He will even challenge you to see the good in it rather than just the bad. You will view the elements that have drawn millions in Asia and beyond to a philosophy of life that has withstood millennia of criticism and wars.

I have recommended this book to our Bible College students as they attempt to reach the Pacific Rim. I recommend it to you as you go forward to reach your world for Christ.

Dr. Wayne Cordeiro
President of Pacific Rim Bible College

“In Australia, the 2006 Census tells us that the number of Buddhists has grown by 107% since 1996. However it seems there has been little growth in understanding Buddhism within the Church or by Christians generally.

Some parts of the Church have adopted Buddhist meditation practices. Some see it as a religion of peace, promoting tolerance and self-understanding, not much different from Christianity. The Buddhist concepts of karma and reincarnation are accepted by a
surprising number of young people, including many in the Church.

In his excellent book, Steve Cioccolanti provides a very welcome window into Buddhism as someone who has been on the inside. Through Buddhist stories and legends, he opens up the teachings of Buddha that are often more about a search for life than pathways to hope and fulfillment. He includes a description of the different variations of Buddhism from different countries, and issues such as women in
Buddhism and "Is Buddha in Heaven?"

The surprising features of this book are not only the candid information about Buddhism, but also the way Steve intertwines this with the Christian message of hope - comparing Buddhist teachings with the Bible, presenting some of the key Buddhist symbols as doorways to eternal life in Christ, and asking personal questions of the reader about their own beliefs, with prayers they can pray for enlightenment.

This is a book that would be of great value to any Christian seeking information about Eastern religions, especially if wanting to share their faith with a Buddhist. It would also be valuable and readable for a Buddhist person to understand their own faith, and to gain an understanding of Jesus.”

REV. ROB ISAACHSEN
Founder of Transforming Melbourne

THANKS TO JESUS CHRIST. Lord, You have given me everything. I give you my life and this book to glorify You. May You use the little I give and multiply it!

MY WIFE, FE. You were my first reader. You are my encourager. Thanks for believing in me!

MY MOTHER, SYA. Thanks for praying for my soul. I owe you so much more than I can say.

ACHARN BAB & GORDON LIM. God used you to first explain Christianity to me. Your style of evangelism has changed my life!

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KIKO ARAKAWA. You always seem to know how to make every project for God look better! Thanks for turning imagination into reality!

DISCOVER CHURCH. Without your love and support, where would I be? Family and friends like you are a gift from God. I love each of you.

THE MILLIONS OF BUDDHISTS whom I love and pray for... You are the reason people are reading this book all over the world.

Preface About Language

It is inevitable that you will learn a few new words as you find out more about Buddhism. For instance, the word *Buddha* is not an English word. It is a Sanskrit word from the root *bud* which means to awaken. Hence Buddha means the “awakened one” or the “enlightened one”. There are many other foreign words you would have to learn if you want to study Buddhism, which creates a language barrier for the average person (even Buddhist!).

If you want to study deeply about Buddhism (and I’m not assuming you do), you will need to learn two foreign and ancient languages, *Pali* and *Sanskrit.* Muslims will understand this as they have a similar belief. If you want to become a serious Muslim, you are supposed to read the Koran in Arabic. Many Muslims who do not speak Arabic just recite the Arabic sounds without knowing the meaning. Buddhists do the same thing by chanting in the ancient languages of India which they do not understand.

Christianity in Europe used to have a similar problem when the Bible was written only in Latin[1]. However, the Protestant Reformation[2] led to the translation of the Bible into native languages[3]. Catholics did not permit the use of the vernacular but continued to conduct masses in Latin up until 1965![4]

Till today, Buddhists do not translate every Buddhist word into their native language. For instance, the word “karma” comes directly from Pali-Sanskrit[5]. Other words such as “reincarnation” are nearly always translated, because few people would recognize the word in its original Pali-Sanskrit form, which is “samsara”.

Don’t feel too bad if you need time to absorb the new words. Almost no one speaks Pali-Sanskrit today; they are ancient languages like Latin or classical Greek. I will give you all Buddhist words in their English and Thai forms, since 60 million Buddhists currently speak Thai. In Thai, the word “karma” is pronounced “gumma” or simply truncated in everyday speech to “gum” (rhymes with “hum”). You can pronounce any Buddhist word in English, in Thai or in Pali-Sanskrit. Throughout this book, I will give you key words in their alternative forms because it’s a bit of education that will help you in cross-

cultural understanding and communication.

To appreciate the influence of Pali-Sanskrit language on Buddhist culture, a Westerner need only compare it to the impact of Greco-Roman language on Western civilization. Imagine a university student trying to successfully qualify as a doctor, lawyer, biologist, chemist or astronomer without learning any new Greek or Latin words! She needs not speak Latin or Greek, but she needs to be comfortable with the terms of her trade. Similarly, to be Buddhist or understand Buddhism, you need to learn some of these ancient words.

Words are free, and more importantly, words build bridges, so please enjoy learning a few new words!

INTRODUCTION I will not assume you know Buddhism. I will walk you through the basics. My main aim is to help Christians understand Buddhism the way it's actually lived, not the way it's taught in textbooks. When Christians talk to Buddhists, you should not feel like they are against Christ or they are "closed" to the Gospel. Not necessarily. That's what I would like to help you understand. While there are some differences, there are also many striking similarities.

So why should we be interested in Buddhism?

Buddhism is the state or majority religion of 12 countries: Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Japan, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tibet, and Vietnam. Buddhism is also very important culturally in several other regions of the world such as India, Indonesia, Singapore, Taiwan and Hawaii[6]. Today at least 350 million people are born Buddhists. That's equivalent in size to the entire population of the United States or half of all Europeans alive today! While most Buddhists were born into Buddhist families, some Westerners are studying and/or converting to Buddhism. Besides that, many people in the world are taking up an interest in martial arts, and 90% of all Oriental martial arts is heavily influenced by Buddhism. So it is relevant for us – Christians, Buddhists, and others – to talk about Buddhism.

As for me, there are many reasons why I love Buddhists. I grew up in a Buddhist country, I received Buddhist teachings, and I have Buddhists in my family. When I used to call myself a deist, I wore around my neck a white Buddha and a Jerusalem cross. Interestingly, while I was in my native Buddhist country, several Buddhist-background believers persuaded me to consider more personally Christianity. Therefore I look at Christianity from Eastern eyes, and I have come to embrace Christ for myself.

But since I have spent some time in the West, namely Australia, different states in America and different nations in Europe, I also have a perspective on Western thinking. I believe that Western intellectuals currently do not understand Buddhism. They explain it in terms of tolerance, harmony and cosmic unity, which I think sells well to the Western public, but if I ever heard any of those terms used by a Buddhist while I was growing up, I cannot recall one instance!

To many Western intellectuals, I suspect, Buddhism may serve as a

reaction against something they dislike, namely Christianity. The truth is, Buddhism is not a reaction against Christianity. Christianity didn't even exist at the time Buddha was around!

When a person comes from that paradigm – in which they are reacting to the Christian traditions they dislike and they adopt Buddhism – they really do not understand what it's about. That is actually part of the appeal to Westerners. It is probably the main appeal amongst scholars, students, and New Agers. The appeal of Buddhism is the mystery of what they don't understand.

In this book, I am going to explain to you aspects of Buddhism in a way that native Buddhists would easily understand, but in a way that you will not likely to ever hear in a Western classroom. You will also learn about the similarities between Christianity and Buddhism that may be unexpected, and read about many real life stories. The lives of modern Buddhists comprise one of the great untold stories of spiritual literature.

I am aware that there are hundreds of books on Buddhism, and similar resources on Christianity. Where my efforts come in is not to repeat or replace their works, but to fill in the gaps and to emphasize certain things that have long been neglected. No doubt many better authors (both native and foreign) have attempted to shed light on these great faiths separately. The gap which remains, it seems to me, is no insider has attempted to bring understanding to both faiths simultaneously. I have been Buddhist and now I am Christian. I have lived with Buddhists and Christians. What I will share will be not be theoretical, but real facts and true stories from an insider's perspective.

There are a lot of reasons to study these two Great Religions of the World – Buddhism and Christianity, and to study them together! After reading this book, its facts, its *never-before-translated* parables, and its real life stories of Buddhists and Christians, you will no longer have to wonder about these two great faiths! At least you should be more open to converse with the next Buddhist (or Christian) you meet.

UNDERSTANDING BUDDHISM

Chapter 1

A Story from Behind the Bamboo Curtain The term “iron curtain” referred to an invisible, ideological wall that separated Eastern (communist) Europe from Western Europe. For nearly 50 years, people inside the communist bloc did not fully know or understand what was happening in the rest of the world. They perceived the West as their enemy. Through much prayer this wall came down, as symbolized by the tearing down of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

A similar invisible wall separates Christians from Buddhists, which I will call the “bamboo curtain”. Non-Buddhists don’t really understand what’s going on inside Buddhist cultures, Buddhist families and Buddhist lives. And most Buddhists also don’t really know what Christianity or the Bible is all about. They sometimes perceive each other as enemies, which is simply not the case.

There are many stories I wish I could tell you, but time and space limits us. We will begin with one. More will come later in this book. *The Story of the Eel* will give you a peek into what it is really like to be born in a Buddhist country and to live as a Buddhist.

Chapter 2

THE STORY OF THE EEL This story is not intended for children. It's an adult story, so I will try to word it delicately so the adults will understand. In this account I will show you how the doctrine of **karma** works in real life.

I travel regularly to Thailand to do some public speaking and on one of my trips I sat down with a Buddhist friend. This is what she told me.

Since the age of 12, I could not say the word "eel"[7]. I could not even stand to hear the word eel. I would literally go into shock. My father once tried to fry some eel and that was the last time. My entire family could not eat eel[8] any more.

My husband of eight years had the job of holding the remote control in his hands while watching TV, just in case the word eel was ever spoken. When we went to the market together, he had to hold my arm just in case we saw an eel in the marketplace. What happened to me?

When I was 12 years old, I ran to Watergate Market[9] and I witnessed an eel go up a merchant woman's skirt. The woman screamed in pain and tried to pull the eel out but the eel bit her. Both the woman and the eel died with blood everywhere. This was in the newspaper 30 years ago.

This incident sunk into my memory and every time I heard or saw another eel, I would literally fall over and shake like an epileptic. According to Buddhism, this is a karma that had followed me from my past life of sins. Thai Buddhists call this *wain gum* or the revenge of karma. Other Buddhists explained to me that in a past life, I must have done something wrong to an eel, so now in this life the eel must do something to me. Our belief is that karma always follows us. It will follow us forever until somehow it is paid for.

I went to the temple and sought for a monk's help. This is what he advised me, "You must first meditate, then *sadau kro*[10]. To do this, you must release 99 eels in 99 temples." I was so afraid. Normally if I only saw one eel I would pass out and faint. The monk told me to release 99! I was so afraid that I brought a friend to hold the bucket carrying the 99 eels while I held on to her hand. I shook all over just holding on to my friend's hand. My friend and I

released all 99 eels in one single temple, so I wondered if it counted or if I had really cheated.

The monk said, “If you cannot do it, then become a nun[11] to pay off your sins.” This meant I had to stay in the temple, wear white, sleep on a mat, eat 2 meals a day, walk in circles, and think about breathing in and breathing out, and which foot I was going to take the next step with. I could only do this for 2 months.

Did it work? It didn’t change a thing! I still could not bear to hear or utter the word eel.

At that time I owned a restaurant which a Christian happened to rent from me. Two years earlier this Christian renter tried to evangelize me and she told me the news about God. But she told me in the wrong way. She said, “Do you want to come to church? Coming to church is good. Being a Christian is good.” She said, “If you do wrong or sin, if you cuss anyone or blame anyone or steal anything from anyone, then on Sunday you can go to church and confess your sins and it’s all gone. The next week you can start sinning again!” I became scared of her and avoided her. I would not go to her church. My husband, however, went twice.

When this lady asked me the third time and I refused, she cussed me out. From that point on, I hated Christians. It became a passion in me. I wanted to know if Christianity teaches people to be like her. What type of God teaches people to be bad?

I developed a drive to know what Christianity was really like. So whenever I sat in a taxi and did not see any idols[12], I would ask, “Are you a Christian? Can you explain Christianity to me?” but not one of them could. One day a relative told me, “I’m a Christian now!” I told my husband we shouldn’t spend any more time with her. I did not want to be evangelized.

My relative kept asking me to church. Finally out of respect for my family, I decided to go to her church. The first morning I came to church, both my husband and I were still hung over from the night before. We drank every opportunity we saw beer. We were beer-oholics. I was sent into the new believer’s room and the minister said, “Pray and dare to ask God for anything! Dare to ask God to show you that He is real.” So I closed my eyes and as I began to pray, I felt like I was levitating. This happened three times but I still would not believe. Maybe I imagined it, I thought.

Nonetheless I wanted to come back to church on Wednesday. And I came drunk again. I asked for the pastor to pray for me, then I went home and continued to meditate as I always did. But something had begun to change. I didn't want to chant in Pali any more, so my husband had to chant by himself. I wanted to go to church.

As I did, I could feel deep down in my heart that I was becoming a more peaceful person. I became a kinder person. I lost my temper less. Pretty soon I started inviting my husband to come to church with me regularly.

My life had changed through attending church, so I decided to get water baptized. It was then that a miracle happened. One day my husband was watching TV and he forgot to press the remote control when someone said "eel". He was so scared that I would pass out. But I hadn't taken any notice. He said, "Honey, didn't you hear they said eel?" I said, "Did they say eel?" My husband was even more shocked, "What? You can say eel, too?!"

This is how we knew that I had been released from all karma. It didn't follow me anymore. There was no more *wain gum* following me for my past sins. After I could say eel for about two months, I was so happy I went to visit my mother who was 84 years old. I told her, "Mother, I can say eel now!" My mother was so happy she asked me, "Can I come to church with you?" She came and Jesus healed her of kidney stones. The doctors had previously told her that she did not have long to live. But after that service he took an x-ray of her and there was no evidence of any stones left!

This is one of the many stories of Buddhists I could tell you. This is the doctrine of karma in real life, not in textbooks. If you have a fear of eels, it is assumed you once hurt an eel. If you were born or became a paralytic, it is assumed you had been bad in a previous life. **Karma is always retributive.**

The self-blame, the fear of karmic revenge, the hopelessness of never being set free from a curse, all add stress and uncertainty to a Buddhist life. Please don't think that the typical Buddhist is living in harmony with nature or floating on a cloud of peace and that they don't need to hear the Gospel that you have to share with them.

The doctrine of karma does not usually produce compassion, but condemnation. When sincere Buddhists try to purify themselves of their own karma, and keep all 227 laws of Buddha (for men), they realize they cannot do it.

This produces even more condemnation.

The Story of the Eel is our first illustration of how Western assumptions so often clash with Eastern realities.

Chapter 4

The Thin Buddha, Fat Buddha and Laughing Buddha

Many people have wondered, “How come Buddha looks so different in various temples? Is he fat or is he skinny? Is he serious or is he funny?” People are not sure.







When you see some of the old statues of Buddha, he looks like a thin man. When you go up to Japan, he looks like Hercules, a big muscular man. When you come down to Thailand, he’s reclining and serene. Go over to China and he has a pot belly and is laughing away. They call him the Laughing Buddha. But go to Tibet and you’ll see he’s very serious and stern. Come back

down to Vietnam and he's thin again.

People look at all this and say, "Which one is he? Which Buddha is the real Buddha?" Just as Buddhism varies from country to country, so too Buddha looks different in each country.

So was Buddha thin or fat? Tradition says that Buddha only ate one meal a day. He was an ascetic who lived a very sparse life in the forest for up to six years. Your guess is as good as mine as to what he physically looked like, but if you ate one meal a day you probably would not be so big. At least I don't think you would have a pot belly. In fact, the pot belly Buddha is a different person, not the original Sakyamuni Buddha. The laughing Buddha was a monk named *Hotei* who is predicted in Mahayana[19] Buddhism to be a returning or end times Buddha, called the *Maitreya*[20].

Was Buddha serious or funny? If you go back to the early Buddhist teaching, you will find that Buddhism was actually opposed to humour and laughter. Out of the 227 rules for monks which are recorded in the *Vinaya*, one of the rules stipulates no loud laughter. It is a sin to laugh so that other people can hear you. Again, I would not be dogmatic about it, but it seems the original Buddha would have been a slightly more serious person than later depictions of him.

The Diversity of Buddhism

Buddhism is as diverse as Christianity. Buddhist devotees all around the world differ in their practices. Some monks shave their eyebrows, some don't. Some monks can have wives, some can't. (This is similar to Christianity: Catholic priests can't marry, Protestant pastors can.[21]) Some wear orange robes, some green, others don yellow or white. Some can wear shoes, some can't wear shoes. Some can carry money, some can't carry money. Some teach reincarnation, some believe in Heaven and Hell. Some believe in the *Dalai Lama* who keeps coming back again and again - the present one being the 14th Dalai Lama. Some believe in a prophetic end time Buddha; in other words, Buddha has come once, but Buddha is coming again, and his name is called *Maitreya*. Some believe that Buddha will never come again. The fact that he is a "Buddha" means it is the last time he came and he will not be born another time.

One reason Buddhists don't agree on theology and practice is that they do not have one agreed text (like the Bible) and the existing texts are

voluminous. (We will examine the main Buddhist texts in the chapter called *The Three Baskets.*) All of this diversity makes it very difficult to pin point exactly what Buddhism is or to make universal statements about what every single Buddhist believes. There are so many different ways people practice it.

But neither is Buddhism a free-for-all. We will start with what everybody virtually agrees on – the life of Buddha – then cover the absolutely fundamental teachings of Buddha on the 4 noble truths, 5 moral laws, 10 karmas, and reincarnation, before exploring the rarely translated parables and prophecies of Buddha.

Chapter 5

WHO WAS BUDDHA?

Who was the historical Buddha? His name was not Buddha, but Siddhartha Gautama. He was an Indian prince who searched for the way to escape karma. He is also known by the title *Sakyamuni*, which means the "Sage of the Sakya clan".

Siddhartha Gautama is held to be the 10th and last reincarnation of the same person. Strictly speaking, once someone has achieved buddhahood, he or she is not supposed to come back. Yet there are some Buddhists who are expecting the *Maitriya* or an End Times Buddha to come back[22] and there are some Buddhists who believe that the *Dalai Lama* is a buddha come back. However, when we speak of Buddha, we will be referring to the Gautama Buddha, the one who declared, "This is the last time I will be born."

(To distinguish him from other buddhas, it is customary to refer to Gautama as the Sakyamuni Buddha.) Buddha was born on April 8 in Lumpini Park[23], a garden in ancient India or present day Nepal. Seven days later his mother Queen *Maya* died. He was subsequently raised by his mother's younger sister *Maha-prajapati*. Five days after birth his father King *Suddhodana* received a prophecy from 8 *brahmins*[24] that Siddhartha had the potential to become a great man. Asita said, "If he does not become a great holy man, he will become a great king. If he becomes a holy man, he will become the greatest founder of the greatest religion in the world." But the youngest of the *brahmins* named *Gaundinya*[25] spoke up and said, "No, he must become a monk and he will become enlightened and the founder of a great religion."

His father, being a king, understandably did not like the idea of his son becoming a monk, so he decided to shield his son from religious teachings and the knowledge of human suffering. He tried to make him enjoy comfort and only see the pleasures of life. In fact, he built 3 palaces for his young son so he could be comfortable during each of the 3 seasons of the year[26].

At the age of 16 he married a young princess, a cousin[27] named *Yasotara*. They were married for 13 years. At the age of 29, he had his first and only son named *Rahula* or *Rahun* in Thai.

It was around this time that the Prince left his palace and saw four different people: an elderly person, a sick person, a dead person and lastly a priest. He saw that after humans are born, they suffer from old age, illness, and death. The thought came to him that everybody suffers and no one could escape the suffering. This was the problem that troubled his heart, he thought about this over and over. He wanted a way out of this vicious cycle – the "wheel of suffering".

Then he thought that in life there is duality. If there's hot, there's cold. If there's suffering (birth, aging, sickness, death), then there must be something opposite (no birth, no suffering, no pain, no death). The prince saw the happiness of the world as an illusion[28] and the true purpose of life is to escape the cycle of suffering. The only way to escape the cycle of suffering is to be liberated[29] from the cycle of life.

He considered that one way to achieve this was to become celibate and a monk. So at the age of 29 he abandoned his newborn baby *Rahula* and his wife *Yasotara*. At first he made a decision to become a *sadhu*, or a monk within the Hindu religion. He cut his hair, changed his clothes, and changed his status from being a very rich person to becoming a very poor person. Whatever he had remaining he gave to his servant *Channa* to take home. He tried to follow two Hindu *brahman* teachers but felt Hinduism did not provide the answer[30]. He left to find his own way.

Soon he had five disciples following him. After 6 years of living as an ascetic in the forest, punishing his body, fasting, praying, and meditating, he gave up. He went bathing in a river and accepted a bowl of milk pudding from a woman named *Sujata*[31]. At this his five disciples were very shocked. Sorely disappointed, they left him.

Alone, Siddhartha continued his search for a way out of the cycle of suffering, choosing a more moderate path. Legend has it that he sat under a fig tree[32] and vowed not to get up until he was enlightened. At the age of 35, he became enlightened.[33] This historically meant the divide of Hinduism and Buddhism. Buddha actually split from the Hindu tradition and the teachings of the *brahmans* and started a new religion.



A Bodhi tree or Bo tree.

Buddha's teaching career began as he sought out two of his original teachers to share what he had found, but as it turned out they were both dead. He remembered his five original disciples. He found them and taught them, but only one understood what he was saying. It was actually the young *brahmin* who had insisted at Siddhartha's birth that he must become a Buddha. Thus *Gaundinya* became the first enlightened Buddhist disciple[34].

After some time, all 5 disciples succeeded in becoming enlightened and constituted the first company of Buddhist monks[35]. These five helped spread what they had learned from Buddha.

Chapter 10

How Jesus Used the Law Lawfully Jesus knows the number of your hair. Jesus knows every sparrow flying through the air. I imagine it is probably difficult for Jesus to hold back all He knows! He knows what will save us. He knows how to fix every problem in our lives. But like a good doctor, He doesn't offer us a cure until He has given us a proper diagnosis of our disease.

The art of diagnosing the sinner's problem has been lost to the modern church. We insist rather on giving the solution, "Just trust in Jesus!" This baffles most listeners because they don't *feel* any personal need to trust in Jesus. They are not aware of the disease for which Jesus is the only cure. If we continue to bait the seeker with the promises of the Gospel, "You won't ever find true happiness and peace until you have Jesus," many seekers will simply think that's untrue. Many sinners are enjoying the life God gave them without acknowledging God. We may argue that their happiness is only temporary, while ours is eternal, but now we are no longer preaching the Gospel Jesus gave us.

Never did Jesus say, "I'm happier than you. That's why you ought to believe Me!" While happiness is one fruit of believing in Christ, happiness was never the central issue of the Gospel.

What is? The disease Jesus came to cure is sin. Sin is an epidemic that results in suffering, death, and eternal separation from a Loving and Holy God. Do people acknowledge that they are sinners? Not usually. That's why God wrote the Old Testament and sent the Holy Spirit – both of which can identify and measure this invisible virus. The purpose of God's Old Testament Laws is to help us realize the extent to which we are sick with sin. The Law prepares the sinner's heart for the Gospel. Without the Law, there would be no conviction of sin. Without conviction of sin, there would be no repentance. Without repentance, there could be no true conversion or faith in Christ.

James wrote, "You commit sin, and are convicted of the law as transgressors" (James 2:9). The Book of Romans is Paul's treatise on the Gospel. In it Paul wrote, "I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet'" (Romans 7:7), quoting the last of the Ten Commandments. "For by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). J.B. Phillips translation puts it this

way, “If there were no Law the question of sin would not arise…Now we find that the Law keeps slipping into the picture to point the vast extent of sin” (Romans 3:20, 5:20) Paul said Christians should explain the Law “so that sin through the commandment might become exceedingly sinful” (Romans 7:13).

It surprises many Christians that the Holy Spirit has been sent to confirm God’s Law. The first ministry of the Holy Spirit is “He will convict the world of *sin*, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). Today preachers tend to talk about becoming righteous in Christ without talking about sin or judgment. Sin is objectively defined by God’s Law and God’s judgment will be based on His unchangeable Laws.

How Jesus Made Himself Known Because there is so little teaching these days on sin and judgment, we forget that Jesus made constant reference to God’s Holy Law in His proclamation of the Gospel. There is no better Gospel preacher than Jesus! There were three instances where seekers literally walked up to Jesus and said, “Tell me how I can get saved!” How did Jesus respond? In all three cases, Jesus said, “What does the Law say?” (Luke 10:26) and “If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Matthew 19:16, Luke 18:20) and “Go, call your husband (referring to her breaking the seventh commandment against adultery)” (John 4:14).

Jesus constantly pointed to God’s Law, but here was the twist. He did not point to God’s Law as the *solution*, but as a diagnostic *test* of our malady.

The Biblical Jesus pointed to God’s Law to reveal *why* we all need a Savior. The hypothetical, modern version of Jesus would have said something like this to a seeker, “You have a God-shaped void in your heart, in fact a Jesus-shaped void in your heart, and if you would just open up your heart and accept Me, you’ll be filled with peace and happiness!” If you read the New Testament, you’ll find the historical Jesus and early apostles never said that. Yet this is what most Christians seem to do.

If a sinner were to ask the average churchgoer today, “What must I do to have eternal life?” he might reply something like this, “You want to be saved?! Before you change your mind…repeat this prayer after me: O God, I open up my heart to let Jesus to come into my life. Forgive me of my sins. I’m now born again in Jesus’ name. Amen.” The sinner walks away thinking, “That was easy,” yet you will rarely see them again in church or committed to the

things of God. You the Christian then wonder to yourself, "But they prayed the salvation prayer! What happened? I just don't understand." What is the problem?

Modern evangelism has strayed away from Biblical evangelism. Modern evangelism no longer sees God's laws as paving the way for the Gospel. Today Christians tend to see God's law as synonymous with "legalism." Some react strongly against God's law, "It's legalistic to talk about the law. It's a relic of the Old Testament." But the Apostle John said in the New Testament, "**For the law was given through Moses** [first]**, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ** [second]" (John 1:17).

The way God evangelized the world was to give the law *first*, then grace *second*. The law revealed the problem of the human heart, then grace revealed the answer for the human heart. If there was a better way to write the Bible or communicate His message to earthlings, God would have done it. The Bible is God's genius. The Old Testament paved the way perfectly for the New Testament.

Bridging Buddhism and Christianity Because Christians have long neglected the value of the law and condemned its use in evangelism, Christians have not seen the value of the teachings of Buddha. Just as Moses' laws paved the way for the Jews to find Jesus, Buddha's laws can pave the way for Buddhists to find freedom from karma[62].

So you don't want to distance yourself from the law, but propel sinners to the law, awakening their conscience to the dangers of living and dying as law-breakers. God gave the law as a powerful weapon to waken careless men's souls. If you look at the New Testament, and look at how they evangelized, you'll find they used the law.

1 TIMOTHY 1:8-10

8 But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully How does one use the law lawfully? The next verses tell us.

9 knowing this: that the law is NOT made FOR a righteous person, BUT FOR the LAWLESS and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for SINNERS, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, 10 for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, The law was *not* made for the born again person. In other words, I as a born again person do not wake up each morning and read the Ten Commandments to remind myself, "Today, I

must not kill anyone. I must not lie. I must not steal." Because God's new nature has been implanted into my heart, by His Holy Spirit, I no longer walk by the law, but by the Spirit. So preaching the law to Christians will tend to condemn the Christian and bind him to legalism. This is an illegitimate use of God's law.

What then is the legitimate use of God's law? 1 Timothy 1:9 tells us, "Knowing this: that the law is NOT made FOR a righteous person, BUT FOR the lawless…the ungodly and for sinners…" That means it's perfectly legitimate to preach the law to sinners and grace to the saints. However, most preachers have done it the other way around! We give grace to the sinners and law to the saints!

What is the result? We tend to produce saints who feel condemned most of the time and sinners who have prayed the "sinner's prayer" without an ounce of repentance. There was no repentance because there was no conviction. There was no conviction because we never spoke the Scriptures that are intended to bring conviction – that is, the law. The Bible says the law came by Moses but grace came by Jesus. No one's ready for Grace until they have first been convicted by the Law.

That's God's order. That's the Biblical way. That's how to evangelize. We can't improve on it. Whether you are speaking to a Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, atheist, or nominal Christian, God's Law must precede God's Grace. Fortunately, in Buddhism, we have a strong ally in Buddha's moral commands. They are virtually the same laws as God's laws.

These are what we will take a look at in the next few chapters.

Chapter 11

The Five Commandments of Buddha

Obviously the 227 commands of Buddha are quite complicated and very difficult for everyone to remember or follow. So the monks have brought it down to 5 rules for the commoner. These rules are really the Christian's friends, so I am encouraging every Christian to remember these 5 rules. They are called the *benja seen* in Pali[63] or *seen ha* in Thai. *Seen* means commandment; *benja* means five in Pali and *ha* means five in Thai[64]. The *seen ha* are the 5 minimum prohibitions for the common Buddhist to keep. If you call yourself a Buddhist, you have got to keep these 5 every day of your life.

I will give each prohibition in Pali first, then translate it into our language, just like a Buddhist would learn it. As you will notice, the *seen ha* appear quite similar to the second half of the Ten Commandments.

Number 1: *Bana tipa-ta veramani!* **Do not kill**.

Some people I meet like to boast, "I can keep that rule! I've never killed anybody!" But I am sorry that is not what Buddha meant. He meant you cannot kill a mosquito while it's biting you. You cannot kill a cockroach while it's crawling on your food. You cannot kill a rat while it's going through your bedroom even if you have little babies to protect. You cannot kill any termite if it's eating your house down.

Now I know for a fact that Buddhist homeowners kill termites all the time. They wouldn't think twice about getting the spray bottle out and killing all those cockroaches. Technically speaking, a Buddhist can't even kill bacteria, and every time you take antibiotics, you kill not only bad bacteria, but probiotics (good bacteria) as well.

"Don't kill" also means you can't eat any meat, you must be a vegetarian. All the wonderful Asian dishes that we love to eat have a lot of beef, pork and chicken in them; well, we are breaking one of the *seen ha*. If we want to be a Buddhist, we must never kill anything.

According to the Thai Dictionary of Buddhism[65], the full meaning of this commandment is to abstain from killing, molesting, hurting any life, or injuring anyone[66].

Number 2: *Atin—na ta-na veramani!* **Do not steal**.

Again, some people like to claim, “I can do that. I never steal.” “Really?” I reply, “I would like to come to your house and check what’s in your music collection and computer! If you have ever copied a song you didn’t purchase or ever watched a pirated movie, you are a thief. You are stealing something that does not belong to you. And you are breaking one of Buddha’s top five commandments.

The Thai Dictionary of Buddhism says the full meaning of this prohibition is to abstain from taking something without permission, stealing, cheating, violating ownership and proprietary rights and damaging the property of others.[67]

Some people I talk to have arguments for why they steal. They think piracy or violating other people’s intellectual property rights is not theft. That’s like the driver who is caught speeding arguing with the police that the speed limit is unfair. That’s called justifying your sins, and that’s what sinners do. Don’t make light of your own sins. When someone pickpockets you, steals your purse, or burglarizes your home, you will not feel happy if the robber justifies himself, “You are too rich, so I thought it was alright to steal from you.” Excuses are no defense. God is looking at the heart.

Number 3: *Garmay sumitcha jara veramani!* **Do not commit sexual immorality**.

That includes sex before marriage (fornication), sex after marriage with someone besides your spouse (adultery), sex with a non-consenting person (rape), sex with a minor (paedophilia), sex with a person of the same gender (homosexuality), sex with animals (bestiality), and sexual fantasy (pornography) - all of these acts make a person sexually unclean.

In traditional Asian cultures, immorality includes any inappropriate contact, kiss or touch with a person who is guarding her purity or does not want the attention. Buddha said don’t do it. You can’t achieve nirvana, go to Heaven, or escape suffering if you violate this prohibition. The safest way to abide by this prohibition, monks and nuns have found, is to vow life-long celibacy, but even then many monks have fallen into pornography, flirting, or breaking of their vows.

Number 4: *Musa wa-ta veramani!* **Do not lie or speak any evil**.

Some people lie so often they forget they lie out of habit. Students lie to

teachers when they plagiarize. Some immigrants lie to immigration officers about their legal and marital status. People lie to the Tax Office about how much money they make and how much tax they should pay. Many real estate agents lie to close a sale and make a profit.

God said it doesn't matter who you lie to, why you lie, or when you lie, if you lie, there's no room for you in Heaven. In Heaven, we are going to be safe and able to trust each other. We cannot trust a liar, so only people who always tell the truth will live in Heaven. Heaven is going to be wonderful.

We are never going to be afraid or suspicious of anyone in Heaven. Suppose 99% of the population in Heaven told the truth, but just 1% lied, it wouldn't be called Heaven anymore; it would fast become Hell! For those of us who want to be part of Heaven, God says, "I have prepared a place called Heaven for all of you. But no lying!" If we have lied, we need to have our karma paid in full (which is possible only by Someone who has never lied – Jesus Christ).

When Buddha commanded people not to speak evil, it also included cussing, cursing, gossiping, and any idle talk. Have you kept this rule perfectly? The Apostle James said: "For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body…And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by Hell." (James 3:2, 6) The "course of nature" can also be translated the "wheel of nature" or the "cycle of destruction and disaster" (The Living Bible). Our tongue sins easily and sets in motion the "cycle of destruction" – the Bible and Buddha agree with each other on this point. The Bible is clear: verbal offences are like uncontrollable flames of Hell. Lying is hellish. If we have ever lied, we need to repent and trust in the One who has never lied – Jesus Christ.

Number 5: *Sura may-ra-ya majjapama tat-tana veramani!* **Do not use any addictive substance**.

That refers to alcohol, cigarettes, drugs, *etc.* A very strict Buddhist might even say that includes coffee and any other addictive substance. Buddha said if you want to escape suffering, you cannot allow your flesh to be addicted to any substance.

These laws are very helpful when Christians talk to Buddhists, as we shall see.

Chapter 12

WHAT WOULD JESUS SAY TO BUDDHISTS?

HOW TO STOP A CONVERSATION If you take the most popular approach to evangelism, you may walk up to a Buddhist and quote them John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." You hope your Buddhist friend gets it, and in case she doesn't, you add, "Jesus loves you."

How will the typical Buddhist respond? I've literally had hundreds of conversations with Buddhists around the world, and they nearly always say the same thing: "But I am a Buddhist." That ends most conversations.

In all sincerity, the Christian starts off telling the Buddhist, "God loves you." In all sincerity, the Buddhist replies, "But I am Buddhist." It's a conversation stopper. Now what do you say?

If you're going to be effective at building bridges with your Buddhist neighbor, you need to know what to say after someone says, "I am Buddhist."

Those who are not accustomed to the typical Buddhist answer ("I am Buddhist") have come up with interesting replies. Here are some I personally have heard: One person said, "I would relate my personal experiences with God." That's one way.

Another person said, "Buddhists are trying to be free from attachments – they want to have no attachment to life, money, or relationships." In my opinion, this is repeating something from a textbook. I don't think you'd find the average Buddhist thinking about attachment or detachment. She would more likely be grateful for some divine help in this life of uncertainty and suffering.

Another person said, "You are Buddhist? That's great! God loves Buddhists, too." Not bad. Most conversations would have stopped at, "I'm Buddhist." At least you broke through a dead end. You're on your way!

Part of my work has been to help prepare Christians to present the Gospel to Buddhists at home and abroad. Let me give you some secrets on how to have spiritual conversations with Buddhists. The more you understand their religious background, their day to day life, their desire to interact with friendly,

pure, prayerful Christians, the more confidence you will have in conversing about spiritual matters freely.

When You Don't Know What to Say!

When Christians meet Buddhists, they should use the teachings of Buddha to start a conversation because it's familiar to the Buddhist ear. Every Buddhist should know and try to live by the 5 Commandments of Buddha (Thai: *seen ha*). You don't want to start with "God loves you" because that is unfamiliar to their ear. Sharing the Good News effectively is simply taking someone from the familiar to the unfamiliar. If you don't start with the familiar, you really have not shared Good News.

The five basic prohibitions are the minimum rules Buddhists should keep. The *seen ha* are definitely the teaching that any common, average Buddhist will be able to understand. They may not know all the other stuff in our Western textbooks, but they know this – the *seen ha*. And most know that they are guilty of breaking them fairly regularly.

When someone says to me, "I am Buddhist," I usually affirm, "That's great! Can you keep the 5 commandments of Buddha?" In nearly every instance, I will get a smile or a laugh. It's a cover-up laugh… a laugh of conviction. Buddhists will tend to brush the personal guilt aside and make the blame universal, "*Nobody* keeps the *seen ha*."

What Would Jesus Say to Buddhists?

The five commandments of Buddha are nearly identical to the Ten Commandments of Moses. It would not be surprising if the Buddhist five were based on the original Mosaic Ten, since Moses was a thousand years older than Buddha and God's laws to Moses were revolutionary and would have been well known to all civilized people.

Jesus made great use of the Ten Commandments in evangelism. When a rich ruler asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus quoted five of the Ten Commandments: "Do not commit adultery [commandment no. 7], Do not murder [commandment no. 6], Do not steal [commandment no. 8], Do not bear false witness [commandment no. 9], Honour your father and your mother [commandment no. 5]" (Luke 18:18-20).

Why did Jesus quote the five commandments to the rich ruler? For the same reason I quote the five commandments to a Buddhist. To gauge his honesty. Why didn't Jesus simply tell the rich ruler to believe in Him? Couldn't Jesus have made it easier for him to get saved by saying, as many Christians do, "God loves you. Jesus loves you. Just believe in Jesus and you'll be fine"?

Jesus didn't do that because He did not "come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Luke 5:32, 15:7). This rich ruler was self-righteous. He would not admit that he was a sinner. His standard of "good" was much lower than God's. So to expose the rich ruler's true sinful condition and his need for forgiveness from God, Jesus quoted five of the holy commandments the man had broken.

But what was the ruler's reply? "I've kept all these from my youth"!

In all honesty, what would you say was the possibility of a proud, rich, young man having never lied, stolen or engaged in any form of sexual impurity? Nil?

In Matthew's account, Jesus added on top of the five commandments the Great Commandment, "AND, you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 19:19). No one, other than Jesus, has ever loved everybody else as himself. That last commandment should have convicted the rich ruler, but he still had the impression that he was a basically good person. Finally, because Jesus "loved him" (Mark 10:21), He gave him one more commandment to expose the ruler's love for sin. Jesus told him to sell all that he had and follow Him. But he loved money too much to leave it.

This verse has been one of the most misunderstood verses in the Gospel. Some have wondered, "If I am a Christian, must I sell all that I own to follow Jesus?" I have met Christian sects who practice this. Other Christians have interpreted Jesus' statement to mean that He is against the rich and poverty is holy. This is lifting Jesus' statement out of context. Jesus was not addressing Christians or teaching on discipleship. Jesus was talking to a proud, self-righteous sinner and He was evangelizing him! Unless a Christian is proud and self-righteous (in which case I wonder how he is Christian), he should have no problem working, earning money, giving, saving, investing, blessing the poor, all as the Bible commands him to in many places.

The purpose of Jesus' command for this rich man to give up all earthly possessions was evangelistic. It was to expose his true love for money above his

love for God. His refusal to let go of money and to follow Jesus proved he broke the first, second and tenth commandments of God (to love God means to put Him first before money; to not worship any idol including the idol of money; to not covet or be greedy for money). The rich man went away “very sorrowful”, and this was a better outcome than continuing in his pride and self-righteousness.

In the book of Acts, we find the record of a man who sold all he had, donated to the church and followed Jesus (Acts 4:36-37). Some believe this humbled man Barnabas was the same rich man who met Jesus; he apparently got convicted and saved later after his first encounter with Jesus. That’s the power God’s moral law has on sinners!

In a similar vein, Buddha taught people to keep at least 5 moral commandments. The dedicated monk must keep 227. When someone says to me, “You are Christian, but I am Buddhist,” I turn what is ordinarily a conversation stopper into a spiritual springboard. Following Jesus’ example above, I ask, “Can you keep the 5 commandments of Buddha?”

Chapter 15

Is There a Hell?

A popular belief is that since Buddhism teaches reincarnation, Buddhists do not believe in Hell. On the contrary, Buddhists have a very vivid idea of Hell. They say sinners will face demons[73] who will command them to "fall into a red hot copper wok"[74] and "climb a spiked cotton tree"[75]. In the *Tripitaka*[76], Buddha talked about both Heaven and Hell. Like Jesus, Buddha taught more about Hell than Heaven!

Buddha pointed out that people who have karma will go to one of the 8 levels or pits[77] of Hell, each representing a greater level of heat and torment. Whoever commits one of the 10 karmas, or breaks the 5 moral precepts (Thai: *seen ha*), will die and fall into Hell.

1st pit of Hell: *Sancheewa Narok* (Hell) For those who break the 1st basic moral law (*seen*). For those who kill animals, ants, mosquitos, other humans or self.

2nd pit of Hell: *Galasutta Narok* For those who break the 2nd basic moral law. For those who like to cheat and steal.

3rd pit of Hell: *Sangkata Narok* For those who break the 3rd basic moral law. For those who like to engage in sexual immorality, pornography, adultery, homosexuality, *etc.*

4th pit of Hell: *Roruwa Narok* For those who break the 4th basic moral law. For those who like to lie, cuss, curse, tell vulgar jokes, talk non-stop or talk too much.

5th pit of Hell: *Maha-roruwa Narok* For those who break the 5th basic

moral law. For those who like to drink alcohol or use drugs.

6th pit of Hell: *Dapana Narok* For anyone who likes to indulge in vice (*abayamuk*), which commonly refers to all forms of gambling including cards, betting, horseracing, slot machines, and going to casinos. Many Buddhists like to justify their sin and convince themselves that they can gamble because Buddha never said anything about gambling in the 5 moral precepts (*seen ha*). But Buddha said that gambling will lead you to the 6th lowest pit, worse than the first 5 pits reserved for those who break each of the *seen ha*!

Abayamuk is not one single sin, but a category of sins. One list shows that there are 4 *abayamuk's*, another list shows 6. A person who is guilty of *abayamuk* is called a *nakleng*, that is, someone who is unafraid and unashamed to sin, and often challenges others to duals, binge drinking, gambling, and other vices.

The 4 *abayamuk*'s are: 1) *nakleng pooying* – womanizing, 2) *nakleng sura* – binge drinking and challenging others to drink, 3) *nakleng gan panan* – gambling as a profession, 4) keeping company with evil people.

The 6 *abayamuk*'s are: 1) drinking, 2) going out at night (in the old days, there were very few places to go to, so going out at night equated to being up to no good), 3) loving entertainment, 4) gambling, 5) keeping company with evil people, 6) being too lazy to go to work. All 6 vices actually can be summarized as the typical lifestyle of the unemployed. Today many people who can work but live on government dole would be considered guilty of *abayamuk* by Buddha. Being useful is a virtue in Buddhism. Being unproductive is a great vice deserving of Hell.

7th pit of Hell: *Maha-dapana Narok* For those who break all 5 moral precepts (*seen ha*). That is, they not only lie, but they also sleep around, steal, kill, and drink alcohol. It would be no exaggeration to say nearly every Buddhist alive would qualify.

8th pit of Hell: *Away-jee Narok* The most famous level of Hell, referred to in popular phrases, threats, and traditional songs; as in, "You shouldn't do

that! You will go to *Narok Away-jee!*"[78] For those who kill parents, monks, or Buddhas. For those who cause division in the religious community (or church splits). Some pastors would be glad for this one! Even if you do it once, according to Buddha, you must go to the worst Hell *Narok Away-jee*.

The lesson is, if we believe Buddha or Jesus, it's really easy to go to Hell! Buddha said the number of those who go to Heaven are like the horns of a cow, but the number of those who go to Hell are like the hairs of a cow's hide. You can ask a Buddhist, "Which is less, the number of horns or hairs?"[79] If they say the horns are fewer, then you can ask, "How many local people do you know who are following Jesus?" He will say not very many. (In Thailand it is only 1%.) We can all see it is a tragic few indeed! The horns are fewer than the hair.

Jesus taught us, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are MANY who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are FEW who find it." What can prevent our being part of the masses who will carelessly go to Hell? Jesus continued in the next verse, "Beware of FALSE PROPHETS, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:13-15). Those who preach there is no Hell yet call themselves Buddhist or Christian look like sheep on the outside, but Jesus warned they are ravenous wolves on the inside. They are false prophets.

False prophets want us to believe that "Hell is an old religious concept invented to scare people into obedience, but we are too modern to believe such things now!" Is this really true? Science has shown that the Biblical description of Hell is startlingly accurate. The Bible says Hell is under the earth.[80] Under the earth is not Atlas as the Greeks claimed, or a Turtle as the American Indians claimed, or elephants as the Hindu Vedas claim, but layers of heat increasing in intensity. The earth's temperature rises 1ºF for every 60ft in depth. The estimated temperature of the earth's core is 6650ºC. The element sulphur (Biblical *brimstone*) has been discovered as a component of the earth's mantle. It would suffocate every breath you would try to take. There are things we still don't understand going on down there.

The Bible is vivid and scientific about its description of Hell. There will no longer be any water to drink[81] (can you imagine no relief from thirst forever?), nor fresh air to breathe[82] (can you imagine not being able to breathe

properly for eternity?), nor sunlight to see[83] (can you imagine total darkness?), nor opportunity to rest[84] (can you imagine needing to sleep but never sleeping again for eternity?), nor a friend to talk to[85] (can you imagine no more conversation with anyone?), nor any sense of purpose whatsoever (can you imagine absolutely no one caring about you? If you think nobody cares about you now, try missing a couple of mortgage payments!). None of these good things we enjoy on earth will be there because water, air, sun, rest, work and friends are all blessings of God, and Hell is devoid of all God's blessings.

What will be there? Everything evil we have ever encountered. Worms, maggots, snakes, beasts and terrible monstrosities[86]… all of which hate *you*[87], because they hate God[88], and you are created in God's image and likeness. They will torment you forever but you will never die. In fact, you will have an heightened sense of awareness. Can you imagine? On earth, one sting or bite can kill you. In Hell, you can be stung, bitten, beaten and torn apart without ever dying.

You may say, "I can't believe a loving God would create such a place called Hell." I understand. Suppose you were God, what would you do? Would *you* allow liars into Heaven? Would *you* allow rapists into Heaven? Both Buddha and Jesus have thought this through and concluded that sinners must go to Hell, morally to be punished and practically to be quarantined from the rest of Heaven's society. How else can God deliver justice to the victims and protect the innocent from becoming future victims? What makes Hell so bad is not God. It is precisely the opposite – His absence! He only needs to put all sinners together, both angelic and adamic, and they will make a Hell beyond imagination.

In medical science there is a condition called "**anesthesia awareness**," in which a patient undergoing surgery can feel everything happening to him, but he cannot communicate to anyone. One Baptist pastor who felt 15 minutes of his insides being operated on was so traumatized that he committed suicide. That was only 15 minutes! Hell will not be 15 minutes of pain, but an eternity. Hell is a prison which you can never escape.

You may say, "Hell is on earth." This is only partially true, because there is still a lot of good on earth. Thank God we get a probationary period on earth where we get to see a little bit of Heaven and a little bit of Hell, and get to choose which one we want for eternity. I'm sure those who have experienced "anesthesia awareness" or seen the human barbarity enacted in war think they have had a taste of Hell. But on earth, surgery ends and wars

eventually stop. In Hell, there is no God to stop them. Hell is the abode of every evil person and evil being. I know many sick people wish they were dead, because they expect their pain will end. But unless they are saved, what will they wake up to after death? Sadly, more of the same, only in greater intensity, lasting not weeks nor months, but forever. What a horrible realization that must be for those who die outside of faith in the Lord.

No one has to go to Hell. God does not want any of us to go there. It's not God sending people to Hell. It's the devil who has a legal right to snatch every sinner as his own possession. *"Do you not know that TO WHOM you present yourselves slaves to OBEY, you are THAT ONE's slaves whom you obey…?"* (Romans 6:16). It's not God overseeing these torments, but the devil whom we worship when we ignore our sinful living and refuse every opportunity to repent and believe in Jesus. Hell is real.

The foremost thought in my heart when I'm witnessing to Buddhists is that no loss will occur even if the Bible proves to be wrong; in fact, we will have enjoyed a good Christian life. But no price can pay for our loss if the Bible is right, and we chose to live in sin and reject God. If there is one chance in a million that Jesus might be right, and we might end up in that awful place, we owe it to ourselves to investigate who Jesus really is before we die!

QUESTION & ANSWER

Will I go to Hell just because I don't believe in Jesus?

No. People go to Hell because they are sinners. You will die and go to Hell only if you remain a sinner.

The person who sins is a sinner. "*The soul that sins, it shall die"* (Ezekiel 18:4). Jesus said, "*Therefore I said to you that you will DIE IN YOUR SINS, for you will DIE IN YOUR SINS unless you believe that I am he"* (John 8:24 RSV). Sinners die because of their sins. Refusing to believe in Jesus is not the reason they die.

Some preachers have popularized the idea that the only sin that will condemn a person to Hell is the "sin of not believing Jesus". Consequently many

Christians have told sinners that they will go to Hell for not believing in Jesus. This is not only unscriptural, it's offensive. It makes people mad, "Are you saying I'm going to Hell because I'm not a Christian?" It doesn't make any sense to the average person.

The New Testament says, *"…All liars will have their part in the Lake of Fire"* (Revelation 21:8). John said, *"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life…"* (1 John 2:15). Paul said, *"Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God"* (1 Corinthians 6:10).

Clearly the New Testament teaches that people will go to Hell for various sins they are guilty of: for lying [breaking the 9th commandment], for hating [breaking the 6th commandment], for fornicating [having sex with someone's future husband or wife, breaking the 7th commandment], for worshipping idols [breaking the 2nd commandment], for thieving [breaking the 8th commandment], for coveting [breaking the 10th commandment], for reviling [slandering or blaspheming, breaking the 3rd commandment], for extorting [misusing authority to get money, breaking the 8th and 10th commandments].

From where does the idea come that sinners go to Hell for not believing in Jesus? My own study points to some 18th-19th century commentaries popular among pastors (I'd rather not name them because that would not be walking in love). These popular commentators focus on only one Scripture to create this doctrine: "And when He [the Holy Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me" (John 16:8-9).

It is noted that the word "sin" is in the singular, implying there is only one sin that condemns the soul. This interpretation ignores a myriad of other Scriptures, four of which we have just quoted. And the word sin is in the singular in many other places, referring to the category of "sin", and no point is made of it. For instance, "we [Christians] should no longer be slaves to sin" (Romans 6:6). Does this refer to the single sin of unbelief? Or was Paul referring to all sins of the flesh which we Christians should avoid, as the context suggests?

Jesus said the Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin, *because they do not believe in Me.* This could mean that the only sin the Holy Spirit will convict

us of is the sin of unbelief. Or this could simply mean the Holy Spirit's ministry is to show the world what sin is and to convince the world that they are sinners; and until they receive Jesus, they will remain sinners who need to be convicted of their sinful state. This interpretation not only agrees with the rest of Scripture, it makes sense to the sinner!

The day I got saved, I was not convicted of my unbelief in Jesus Christ. No! I did not have any personal relationship with Jesus Christ yet. I was convicted by my own sins, too long and too embarrassing a list to tell anyone. The Holy Spirit revealed to my heart my true moral weakness, duplicity, and responsibility in hurting others' lives, for which I knew I deserved Hell.

Only after being saved and developing a personal relationship with Jesus did I realize that disbelieving Him is a great sin. He is so good, He loves me so much, His Word is always true, why should I ever doubt Him?

The modern method of evangelism tends to ignore the heavy price of sin, so sinners are confused about why a loving God would send them to Hell. They think they're not really that bad. A loving and pure God knows the truth about each sinner, and will protect everyone in Heaven from a liar, a thief, a fornicator, a murderer, *etc.* He has to!

Buddha was not shy about preaching his 5, 8, 227, or even 311 commandments. Jesus, John and Paul were not shy about preaching God's Ten Commandments. The problem of not being able to keep the law drives people to the solution provided at Calvary. "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24).

People do not go to Hell because they are not Christian. People go to Hell because they are sinners. Refusing to believe in Jesus will not take you to Hell, but believing in Jesus is the only way to get you out of Hell. How can we escape our just sentence? By repenting and accepting Jesus' payment for our many sins.

Chapter 18

KING ASOKA & THE PYTHON THREE STORIES FOR CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Let me tell you three stories from Buddhism, any of which you can use when you talk to a Buddhist. Of all the Buddhist stories, these should be emphasized the most, but rarely are by Westerners. Your eyes will be among the first to read it translated in your own language. Are you ready for this?

The first is the story of *King Asoka & the Python* Next the story of the *Blind Turtle* The third comes from the last words of Buddha, containing a series of stories of *The Brahman who asked to be free from karma, The Angel & the Stone* and *The Gongjak & Lightning Bug*.

You can use these three stories any time with a Buddhist or any person who believes in karma.

Buddha taught that there are 10 worst karmas or the 10 ways of death: namely, 3 physical karmas, 4 verbal karmas, and 3 mental karmas. (Notice the word karma is in each case understood in the negative sense of *bad* karma, and is nearly always so.) Just in case we think there is a little wiggle room out of Buddha's 10 commandments, the following story is an explicit example of a mental sin. This Buddhist story gives the penalty for having even one of the least of these karmas. It's a well known story you can use with any Buddhist.

KING ASOKA & THE PYTHON This is the story of King Asoka's father turning into a snake. Many Buddhist stories are told in parables, so you don't have to accept them as literal facts. Parables illustrate a truth that Buddhism teaches.

First of all, you may be wondering who King Asoka is. He was an ancient Indian king who came to the throne by killing all his half-brothers' and leaving only his one full brother alive. Asoka became a Buddhist convert. His name is known among Buddhists because he is credited with spreading Buddhism about 200 years after Buddha died. His name in Pali-Sanskrit is *Ashoka* or "without sorrow". His full title in Thai is *Praya-Asoke-Maha—Raj*, which may be transliterated as "Pharaoh Happy Great Raj." King Asoka is a very important figure in Buddhist history. This is a legend associated with him.

When King Asoka's father was still alive, he was a good man who kept all the commandments[97], prayed always and never failed to give alms to the poor. He searched for a way to escape sin and go to Nirvana. He sincerely adored the ways of Buddha and strictly kept all Buddha's commandments. Many times in his life he donated gifts to the monks and to the temple.

One day he was cutting across a farm on his way to the temple. He happened to see many little fish[98] in a puddle of water. He thought to himself, "If I caught these fish, they would make a nice dish of marinated fish.[99] He only thought this in his heart but he did not obey his intention.

Not long after that he, being old, died a natural death. When his spirit arrived at the gates of Heaven, the angel who kept the gates of Heaven said, "You must pay for your sins first or else you cannot enter Heaven." The father of King Asoka became a python that dwelt in the Himmapan jungle, eating fish and other living animals.

When King Asoka ascended to the throne instead of his father, he was also a good man who faithfully kept all the commandments. He succeeded in learning all the teachings[100] of Buddha until he was able to fly and walk on air. After he died and departed from this earth, he went up to Heaven. He asked the angel who kept the gates of Heaven where his father was, for he longed for him. The angel answered, "Your father has gone to pay for his sin since he violated the commandment and is now a big snake living in Himmapan jungle eating fish and other living animals. If you want to see your father, you must go back and find him in Himmapan jungle."

When the python saw his son, he did not recognize him and said to himself, "This is my food." (The story assumes that King Asoka is no longer in human form, but in some animal form.) Before he could eat him, his son called to him, "I was your son when you used to be a human." The snake challenged him, "If you were truly my son, then prove it by walking on my back from head to tail. If you can do it without falling off, then truly you are my son. But if you fall off, I will eat you until nothing is left because you are my food."

The son moved up and down the snake's back many times without falling. Then the son asked the snake, "How is it that when you were human, you kept many commandments and were generous to the needy, yet did you not receive any merit[101] in return?"

> The father told his son, “Your father violated the commandment to not kill. [102] I only thought to kill in my heart without committing the act, and for that mental sin I have to become a python to pay for my sin in Himmapan jungle.”
>
> Therefore the son asked the father, “How long will it take you to pay for your sin?”
>
> The father replied, “If my son wants to know how long, then let him count how many scales are on my back. According to the number of scales on my back, that’s how many times I must come back to suffer and pay for my sin!”

One lifetime per scale. It’s obvious Buddha defined sin and warned of the horrible repercussions of sin.

He taught it in such a way that many people assume he taught reincarnation, but I don’t think it can be proven that Buddha himself believed in reincarnation. He simply taught that one lifetime of doing good deeds and avoiding bad deeds is not enough to erase your sins. He said it would take you lifetimes. If you were as good King Asoka’s father, which would be pretty tough to beat, you would still have to come back as many times as there are scales on a snakes back, and there are a lot of scales on a snakes back! I’ve never counted, but I’m sure there are hundreds. That’s a lot of suffering.

The New Model Thai-English Dictionary Volume II (1984) actually defines this vicious cycle *wattasongsan* as “eternal suffering”. Why would it be called *eternal* if we can keep coming back in an ever improved state until we are finally so good we escape? No, everyone born is imprisoned in sin, which leads to *eternal suffering*.

Buddha had such a deep revelation of personal sin that I suppose it would be difficult for anyone who doesn’t understand sin to understand him. His insight is reminiscent to Martin Luther’s in the 1500s. Everyone can comment on the evils of the world, but Luther was disturbed by his own wretched state. Publicly he was a monk of good standing in the *Roman* Catholic Church, but privately he was tormented by the thought of what might happen to him when he faced his God on the Day of Judgment. It drove Luther to the Bible where he found his answer in Paul’s letter to the *Romans*, appropriately enough!

In 500BC, a contemporary of Buddha had a similar insight. It was Socrates who said to Plato, “It may be that Deity can forgive sins, but I do not

see how!” How can a just God ignore justice and allow our sins to go unpunished? What can we offer to atone for our sins? And who can pay the just price? The best of minds have searched the answer, but never found it.

Their best conclusion seems to allude to reincarnation, only because they did not see how one sinner’s life can pay for his ever increasing debt of sin. It may surprise many Christians to know that Jesus taught a similar parable as the Story of *King Asoka & the Python*. I will address this in detail in the next two chapters.

Chapter 20

THE KING & THE UNGRATEFUL DEBTOR Jesus taught one parable that can be misconstrued as teaching on "reincarnation". Buddhists love to hear this story. It's a parable found in Matthew 18 about how many days and lives a sinner owes to God!

MATTHEW 18:23-35

23 Therefore the kingdom of Heaven is like a certain king …

It is worthy to mention that the sages liked kings! Both Buddha and Jesus liked to bring up kings because most people in the world understand kings and kingdoms.

23 Therefore the kingdom of Heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him TEN THOUSAND TALENTS.

25 But as he was NOT ABLE TO PAY, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.

When a person is in debt and cannot pay, he has to sell everything that belongs to him and keep working until the debt is settled. This particular servant's debt was so deep that he could not afford to repay it even with his life. The king required his life to be sold, and the lives of his wife and his children, too. It sounds a lot like what Buddhism is saying: one life is not enough!

26 The servant therefore FELL DOWN [this is what we are supposed to do] **before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'**

27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, RELEASED him, and FORGAVE him the debt.

28 But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a HUNDRED DENARAII [much less than ten thousand talents]**; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'** [He threatened him.]

29 So his fellow servant FELL DOWN at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'

30 And he would not, but went and threw him into PRISON till he should pay the debt.

Now understand that when you owe a debt, it is within the rights of the creditor to have you put in prison. The creditor really didn't do anything wrong, because if you have a debt that you haven't paid on time, you belong in prison. And the Bible would agree that if you have sin, you belong in spiritual prison. But now watch the twist of the story.

31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came

and told their master all that had been done.
32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you ALL THAT DEBT [we're going to figure how big this debt was] **because you begged me.**
33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'
34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers [that's what we experience when we ignore debt – torture!] **until he should pay all that was due to him.**
35 So My Heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

Whenever you read the Bible, the best thing you can do is to put yourself in the story. The mistake we tend to make when we read the Bible and don't understand it is to assume, "This applies to someone else." No, this story is about us!

Who's the king? God Himself is the King in this story. Who is the servant that owes ten thousand talents? That's us. By parable, Jesus is comparing our accountability to the world's financial system to our responsibility to God's spiritual system. "The kingdom of God is like this." The Bible says that we owe God ten thousand talents of debt for each of our sins. Now let's find out how much that is.

1 talent = 60 minas.

1 mina = 100 denarii.

Now if you cross reference the Bible, you'll find out that in another parable, in Matthew chapter 20, the master agreed with the laborers to pay each of them a denarius per day for their labor. So a denarius is equivalent to "one day's wage."

Now let's do the math: 1 talent equals 60 minas. 1 minas equals 100 denarii. 1 denarius equals a day's wage. That means 1 talent equals 6,000 denarii (60 minas x 100 denarii) or 6,000 days' worth of wages. Therefore 10,000 talents equal 60 million denarii or days of labor.

Other Scriptures corroborate this calculation. In the Old Testament, King Amaziah of Judah hired 100,000 soldiers from the northern kingdom of Israel. How much did he pay for so many soldiers?

2 CHRONICLES 25:6
6 He also hired one hundred thousand mighty men of valor from Israel for ONE HUNDRED TALENTS of silver.

One hundred thousand soldiers agreed to go to war for one hundred talents. Let's see if that was fair wage: 1 talent equals 6000 denarii, so 100

talents equal 600,000 denarii. Divide that by the number of soldiers and each soldier was paid 6 denarii or 6 days' worth of wages. Since Amaziah pre-paid these men before they ever went to battle, 6 days' wages seem a very fair deposit. None of them ended up fighting because a prophet averted war, so Amaziah lost his deposit and 100,000 men kept 100 talents!

Each sinner owes not 100 talents, but 10,000 talents or 60 million denarii! This is what Jesus taught. Let's pause for a second, as this is extremely important. How long is a life? If you live 100 years, how long is your life in term of days?

A year has 365 days. That means that if you're alive for 100 years, you have 36,500 days. The Bible reminds us that life is short. "For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (James 4:14).

How short is your life in term of days? For most readers, you probably have less than 15,000 days left. And you have no guarantee of tomorrow.

Life is extremely short.

Let's say we give you a lot of grace, and suppose that you are capable of working from the day that you're born till the day that you die. You take no rest. You work seven days a week. How many lifetimes will it take for you to pay this debt of 60 million denarii?

Let me make the calculation for you. The days of work owing, divided by the days of a single life, equals the number of lifetimes required to pay the current debt of sin, assuming no more debt is incurred in future lifetimes. Are you ready?

It will take you 1,643.8 lives. Since you cannot be born 80%, we'll round up the total. It will take you 1,644 lives of continuous work, seven days a week, from the day you're born until the day you die, to pay off your sins. That's how much you owe.

Now that is only how much one person owes. Currently, we have 6 billion people. So 1,644 lifetimes worth of perfect work multiplied by six billion human beings ...the total human debt is now worth 9,864 billion lives worth of perfect work 7 days a week.[104]

Let's translate that into days instead of lifetimes. Each person owes 60 million days of perfection, multiplied by six billion human beings, equals 3.6

billion, billion days or 36 x 10^{16} days. Since Creation, there have only been 2.2 *million* days. Humanity would need 3.6 *billion, billion* days to pay off its runaway debt to God.

What is Jesus saying to us? Exactly what Buddha was teaching. It is impossible for you to rid yourself of sin by your own good works. All you can do is fall at the Master's feet and say, "Lord, have mercy on me, because I have not enough to pay and I am going straight to Hell. I cannot boast that I go to church. I cannot boast that I've been water baptized. I cannot boast that I've read this book or studied many religions."

On the Day of Judgment, I won't be able to help you. I'm glad you're reading my book, but I can't help you. I owe the same debt you do. All I've done is fallen at the Master's feet like this servant in the parable and said, "Jesus, please have mercy on me. I have wronged you and I've wronged others, and the debt is accumulating every day. I cannot pay, but I know You can."

Whereas Buddha offered no solution, God sent Jesus Christ to die 2,000 years ago. The most amazing fact about the Gospel is that in *3 days*, Jesus paid the entire debt of humanity in full! This begs the question: "How come? How come Jesus could pay *everybody*'s debt, which amounts to billions and billions of days' worth of perfect work, and do it in only 3 days? How did He manage to pay off so much?"

In fact, I want to let you know, Jesus overpaid for you. He paid too much!!

What we try to do is not enough. But what Jesus did is too much!! Why is that? Think with me. For those of you who run your own business, you're going to get this straightaway. For those of you who are employed, you'll get it too.

The standard work day is 8 hours a day. The Hebrews actually divided the ideal day into 3 parts: 8 hours of sleep[105], 8 hours of work, 8 hours of family time and leisure. So most people have 8 hours a day to work. I understand some people work longer hours, but nobody can work 16 hours a day for the rest of their lives. So in any city or country, any farm or firm, everybody has about 8 hours a day to work.

Question: Why is it that the CEO of a company can earn so much more income than a salesman? They both have 8 hours a day to work. They both have the same physical limitations. They clock in at the same time. They clock out at

the same time. How come the CEO makes $200,000 a year while the salesman works just as hard and only makes $40,000 a year?

Why? Different positions. The CEO has a higher rank. He doesn't have more time. And not all CEOs have more talent either. But because of the position, his time is worth a lot more.

Australia and New Zealand were the first countries in the world to enact minimum wage laws in 1896. As of 2007, the minimum wage in Australia is AU$13.47 per hour, or US$11.57 per hour. That is how much a minimum wage earner's time is valued. Compare that to former President Bill Clinton's hourly fees. In 2006, President Clinton made US$10.2 million for giving 57 speeches. [106] That translated to nearly US$180,000 per speech. If Bill Clinton spoke for 45 minutes during each speech, that would mean he was paid US$4000 for each minute he spoke! Why is he paid so much? Does he have more time than the minimum wage earner? No. He has a higher position.

For those who come from kingdoms, you will understand this. In Thailand, the Princess of Thailand - not the queen, just the princess – is often invited to various Grand Opening ceremonies. There, photographers and a yellow ribbon await her. When she cuts the yellow ribbon, do you know how much she is paid? 2 million baht. That's around AU$75,000 or US$64,000. She graces the ceremony, she cuts a ribbon, two million baht is due her, she goes home. Why is her time worth so much? She has the second highest position in the land. She is the daughter of the King.

You and I, on other hand, may work 8 hours a day, every day for an entire year, yet still not get 2 million baht. Why? Lower status. The Princess has a higher status, so that's why her time is worth more.

If you understand this, you will understand why I encourage every Christian to search the Scriptures that tell you who you are *in Christ* and confess them every day. If you understand the position that you have *in Christ*, you will understand why many wise Christians can work with no sweat, no stress, and no worry, yet become richer than sinners and more blessed than their colleagues. We may put in the same hours, but I have a higher position. I'm the son of the CEO of Heaven. So if I believe I have been made an heir of God and joint heir of Christ[107], I am more than a conqueror through Christ[108], and I am seated in Heavenly places in Christ Jesus[109], then God should be able to bless me more, not only financially, but in my health, my family, and my relationships. [110] No parent ever loved their child more than God the Father loves us.

With the above understanding of position, time, and value, let's return to Jesus' call and accomplishment. God the Father looked down on earth and saw the debt of the world. He searched but found nobody who could pay for it. No one was worthy. In fact, there's not enough gold buried in the entire world to exchange for the debt of sin owing to God.

And so God said, "I'm going to have to send the Lord of Heaven Himself." Hebrews 7:26 says that Jesus is "higher than the Heavens." You understand, of course, that the Owner of Heaven is worth more than Heaven itself. So Heaven and earth did not have enough to pay. But the Lord of Heaven came down to earth and said, "With My time, with My life, I will pay for all of your sins."

Jesus came to pay for six billion people's sins, plus those of all the others who were born before us. Jesus said, "I'll do it in three days. In fact, I'll over pay."

The first day the Lord of the Universe spent in Hell was enough. As the Highest Authority above all royalties and governments, even a second of his time is worth more than all the powers of this world. One day should have been enough. Three days in Hell was over-redemption! It is our guarantee that nothing is left owing. He has fully redeemed us from Satan and we are now His. All sins – past, present and future – are completely expunged. In Christ, not only is the believer forgiven, but blessed overwhelmingly, and preserved securely for His glorious Coming. That's what Jesus accomplished which no-one else could do.

QUESTION & ANSWER

Is there a God in Buddhism?

Buddha never denied the existence of God. His teachings are deeply rooted in the assumption that there is absolute morality and there is a just distribution of merits and demerits. This strongly implies the presence of an Intelligent, Personal and Moral God. Otherwise, who is keeping track of every person's moral decisions and the distribution of rewards and punishment?

Morality without Personality is an impossibility. It would take not only a moral Person to keep count of everybody's thoughts, words and actions, but

also a very intelligent Person to keep track of karma. This Being would have to be All-Seeing, All-Knowing, and Perfectly Just. Is this not, by definition, belief in a Moral Omniscient God?

In Thai Buddhism, there is a title used to refer to God: *Sing Saksit Nai Sakolaloak*. Thai Buddhists know this refers to "Something Holy in the Universe." When Buddhists pray, they will often pray to *Sing Saksit Nai Sakolaloak*. So they do actually pray to the Supreme Being, only they don't know His Name is Jesus Christ.

This is similar to the idolatrous Athenians praying to the *Unknown God*. The Athenian religion was certainly not centered around the *Unknown God*, but neither could it deny His existence. Paul highlighted what they considered minor and declared, "The One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:23).

The Bible says that every child is born with the knowledge of God – they are "alive unto God" (Romans 7:9). No child is born with an "I don't believe in God" gene. No child dies and goes to Hell. They all go to Heaven. Only after social conditioning, peer pressure and religious indoctrination does a child accept human theories and deny God. But even then, for the rest of his life, a person lives with an awareness of Eternity (Ecclesiastes 3:11) and of the coming Judgment (Romans 2:15-16).

Chapter 23

WHICH DENOMINATION?

WHAT DID BUDDHA TEACH?

What did Buddha really say? This is actually going to depend on which Buddhist denomination you subscribe to. Buddhism much like Christianity is fragmented into many denominations[117].

Much as Christianity is divided into two[118] main branches, Catholics and Protestants, so too Buddhism is divided into two[119] main ones, Mahayana and Hinayana.

HINAYANA Although today there are two main denominations of Buddhism, there were many to start off with. At the time of King Asoka[120] (Thai *Asoke*, English *Without Sorrow*), one of the ancient kings of India, there were actually 18 denominations of Buddhism. All of them are now defunct except one. The only one that survived out of those 18 is called Hinayana[121].

Hinayana is the form of Buddhism prevalent today in Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Thailand. We could call it "**Southern Buddhism**". It's considered the oldest, strictest and purest form of Buddhism. For this reason it is also known as Theravada [122] or the "Way of the Elders."

MAHAYANA A newer denomination called Mahayana[123] emerged in China in the 2nd century, traveled to South Korea, then crossed over to Japan[124] by the 6th century. Hence we could call it "**Northern Buddhism**".

When you examine Mahayana Buddhism, you will see that they are mixing some of the local belief systems with traditional Buddhism. They honor other buddhas in addition to the historical Buddha. They add a mythology of ghosts, gods, goddesses, protecting spirits, and so-called Mahayana saints (Sanskrit: *bodhisattvas*).

The most famous of these saints is Guan Yin.[125] She is worshipped as a saint in a similar way Catholics venerate Mary. Catholics are ambivalent

about whether Mary is divine or merely a human being who gave birth to the Savior of the world. Catholics may not say Mary is above Jesus, yet many Catholics venerate her more than they do Jesus. In a similar way Mahayana Buddhists end up venerating Guan Yin more than they do Buddha. They would be ambivalent about whether or not she's a god, yet if they had to pray, they wouldn't pray to Buddha, they would pray to Guan Yin first. A lot of Catholics also won't pray in the Name of Jesus, but they will pray to Mary first.

THE STORY OF FEMALE WORSHIP Female worship is a very interesting development in both our religions. Obviously this is not what either Jesus or Buddha intended. The misunderstanding about Christianity runs so deep that many Muslims believe the Trinity refers to "God the Father, Mary the Mother of God, and Jesus" – which concept Muslims violently reject, as do also Christians! When we go back to the Bible, we find that Mary was a special woman indeed, but not once worshipped. No one ever prayed to her. Biblical Christianity gives at least 3 witnesses about Mary: The angel Gabriel spoke of Mary, "Blessed are you *among* women!" (Luke 1:28). Had he intended to recognize her divine status, Gabriel should have said, "Blessed are you *above* all women!" Gabriel did not.

Mary spoke a psalm of praise when she and her cousin Elizabeth were thanking God for their supernatural pregnancies. Mary sang, "My soul has rejoiced in God *my Savior*" (Luke 1:47). Who needs a Savior but a sinner? Mary acknowledged she was a sinner who needed a Savior just like everybody else. She was not sinless like the Son of God whom she was destined to carry. Jesus alone was sinless and therefore able to save sinners, including Mary.

When one man interrupted Jesus' sermon by drawing attention to the presence of his mother and brothers, Jesus retorted, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father in Heaven is My brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:47-50). If we believe Jesus, then doing the will of God is more important than paying attention to Mary.

When a woman interrupted Jesus, He had a similar response. Luke 11:27-28 records: "And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, 'Blessed is the womb that

bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!' But He said, '*More* than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!'" What was Jesus saying? Mary was blessed to be chosen by God to carry His Son, but any Christian who hears God's Word and does it is *more* blessed than Mary!

Lastly, we refer once more to Mary's own words. There was only one occasion when someone tried to depend on Mary to intercede for them. This was during the wedding feast of Cana, where they ran out of wine. Someone who did not have a relationship with Jesus approached Mary to inform her of the predicament. Her reply was not, "Let me perform a miracle for you!" Instead her reply was, "Whatever He [Jesus] says to you, do it!" (John 2:5). Mary knew the secret to receiving miracles from God was to obey Jesus. Would that more Christians listened to Mary!

The point here is that praying to Mary was completely foreign to the New Testament and would have shocked the Blessed Virgin herself. The idea of worshipping Mary is nothing more than human invention.

Its followers reason that if we should worship Jesus, how much more should we worship Mary His mother? By logical extension, we should worship even more Ann! Ann, for those who do not know, was Mary's mother! If we continued along this line of human reasoning, how far back should we go? Theoretically we should worship our oldest ancestor Adam, the first sinner. The reason ancestor worship is not in the Bible is our ancestors were all sinners. Only Jesus was born sinless, lived sinless, and died sinless. Jesus is unique. Jesus alone is divine and worthy of worship.

When we speak of Christianity, we do not refer to Mary worship because it was an unscriptural practice added after Jesus rose again and after the Bible was completed. Likewise, when we speak of Buddhism, we do not refer to the worship of Guan Yin because a lot of Mahayana teaching came long after the time of Buddha.

Some may wonder why they sometimes see statues of the goddess Guan Yin in a Theravada Buddhist temple. Theravada Buddhists are willing to mix their beliefs with Chinese traditions because the Chinese are considered rich. Money buys. These Theravada temples are not strictly following the Theravada way. Follow the money.

VAJRAYANA There is a third school of Buddhism I'm only going to mention

briefly. It's called Vajrayana.[126] It's the form of Buddhism that exists in Tibet and Mongolia. Shingon Buddhism in Japan is also considered Vajrayana.

Vajrayana, also known as Tantrayana, is more esoteric than the other schools. It's got secret practices. It's got stories which Tibetan monks claim Buddha secretly taught his disciples.

The main distinctive of Vajrayana is that whereas earlier Buddhism implied it would require many merits over many lifetimes to achieve nirvana, Vajrayana claims to provide an accelerated path to enlightenment. One may say Hinayana is the slow track. Vajrayana is the fast track!

The fast track simply means more rules, such as circumambulations of holy sites and mountains, frequent prostrations, and repetition of prayers. The new initiate will not know much about these rules because secrecy is a cornerstone of Tibetan Buddhism. High level lamas are not allowed to share all the rules to the uninitiated, but we are aware that they involve chanting, yoga, the use of bells and drums, and sexual exercises to redirect one's sexual energies towards a greater goal. These practices demand high levels of discipline and a lot of suffering.

A common element of many religions is self-inflicted suffering. This can be found in Tibetan Buddhism, Filipino and Latino forms of Catholicism and Shi'a Islam. Within our conscience, all of us know that we are sinners, and our sins deserved to be punished. Only the sincerest but misguided among us take it a step further by punishing themselves through harsh treatment of their flesh, even self-flagellation. If only they knew that Jesus suffered the sum total of every man's sin once for all, they would be relieved to know that salvation is paid for, and they no longer need to suffer now in this life nor in the next.

WHICH BUDDHIST DENOMINATION?

After Buddha's death in the 5th century BC, there arose 18 competing schools of Buddhism. Theravada is the only surviving one of those ancient schools. Whereas Chinese Buddhism emerged later in the first century BC and added new scriptures[127] with new ideas such as the veneration of bodhisattvas[128]; and Tibetan Buddhism emerged later in the fourth century AD, adding new scriptures[129] with new instructions such as how to prepare the dying; Theravada stayed strictly with the original teachings of Buddha. Therefore it is considered the purest *nikai* or denomination. It ought to be, as far

as anyone can tell, closest to what Buddha taught historically.

Therefore it's my understanding that Theravada Buddhism is the oldest and strictest form. It's also my understanding that Thailand is the largest practicing Buddhist country in the world. So for these two reasons we have focused on Buddhism as it is lived and practiced in the largest Theravada Buddhist country in modern times. However, I have not excluded perspectives from other countries when it was appropriate to touch on them.

The above overview of Buddhist denominations was necessary because the reader should understand that whatever I say may not be accepted or agreed upon by all Buddhist denominations. This will, of course, be the case because there are divisions between themselves. However, we can say that as far as the oldest sect goes, and as far as the largest Buddhist country goes, this is what most Buddhists believe and practice.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Who is the Dalai Lama?

A noteworthy distinction of Tibetan Buddhism is the Dalai Lama. The term was bestowed by a Mongolian emperor on a Tibetan monk in 1578, and is a mix of Mongolian and Tibetan words.[130] The Dalai Lama used to serve as a priest for the rulers of Mongolia, who first invaded Tibet in 1240. He maintained some political power over Tibet under his various Mongolian and Chinese rulers, but lost it when Tibet fell under communist China. The current Dalai Lama was exiled to India in 1959 and has technically renounced political power, although his sermons remain very nationalist and political.

The belief in a Dalai Lama is the result of mixing influences from Chinese Buddhism and Hinduism. The original Indian version of Buddhism teaches that Sakyamuni Buddha was the 10th reincarnation of a person and because he has become Buddha, he has passed out existence. He has won the privilege to never be reincarnated again, so who is the Dalai Lama?

The Dalai Lama is considered the reincarnation of the male Buddha of Compassion, who is known in China as the female goddess **Guan Yin** (or Lady Mercy), and whose identity may have been borrowed from a Hindu god such as

Shiva or Vishnu. The present Dalai Lama is held to be the 14th reincarnation of this person.

The Dalai Lama will never have any power or influence in a traditional Buddhist country other than Tibet. His existence, in a certain sense, contradicts Buddhism. Tibetan Buddhism teaches that this Buddha is reborn again and again, and evidently always in Tibet. But Theravada Buddhism teaches that once someone is enlightened or becomes a Buddha, he passes out of existence completely.

The Dalai Lama is the unique belief from a third form of Buddhism that exists only in Tibet. It is not considered the belief of the original form of Buddhism that existed in India, Sri Lanka, and Southeast Asia.

The present 14th Dalai Lama has repeatedly stated that he will never be reborn inside a territory controlled by the People's Republic of China, and has occasionally suggested that he might choose to be the last Dalai Lama by not being reborn at all! …Which is just as well because China has recently (Aug 2007) passed a law that bans Buddhist monks in Tibet from reincarnating without government permission.[131]

What is Zen?

Zen is a late form of Buddhism that started in 7th century China and spread to Japan. The word “zen” is related to the Sanskrit word *dhyana* which means meditation. Zen emphasizes direct personal experience through meditation. Sacred texts and theoretical knowledge are viewed with skepticism. Zen masters do not attach much importance to words, but rather aim for peace by seeking nothing. Zen rejects a scholarly search of truth, which is ironic considering it is most popular in Western universities.

What do you think about meditation?

That’s a very interesting topic – important to both Buddhists and Christians. It is simply beyond the scope of this present book. I am aware of several experiences of Buddhists and Christians I would like to share, but perhaps in another seminar or a future book.

Chapter 24

THE THREE BASKETS (TRIPITAKA) TRIPITAKA

It should be accepted by all that what Buddha taught is recorded in a sacred text called the *Tripitaka* in Sanskrit or *Pra-trai-pidok* in Thai, which means the "three baskets". Why three baskets?

The stories of Buddha were handed down orally until they were recorded on palm leaf scrolls. They had to use a lot of scrolls to write down the 10,000 stories of Buddha, so they organized and kept these scrolls in three different baskets; hence *Pra-trai-pidok.* The 'pra' is simply an honorary prefix, and the 'trai' shares the same root as Trinity, meaning three.

So the roots of all languages obviously go back to Babylon, where the Bible says one proto-language was confounded into many (read Genesis 11).

LINGUISTICS

While common daily words (such as *hi, bye, welcome, thank you, yes, no,* and *I love you*) may bear no resemblance among foreign languages, key Biblical words nearly always share similar roots in languages all over the world.

The Trinity is a key concept of the Biblical Creator God, and 'tri' is the root word for three in most European and Indian languages (*trois* French, *tres* Spanish, *tre* Italian, *drei* German, *tri* Pali-Sanskrit).

The 7 day week is universally accepted among Buddhists and Christians, yet unlike the day, month or year, the week has no astronomical basis on the movement of the sun, moon, stars or even the earth. The only basis for a 7 day week is God's Story of Creation in Genesis, where God created the universe in 6 days and rested on the 7th, calling it the *Sabbath*. The word for the 7 day week in other languages? *Semaine* in French, *semana* Spanish, *sabda* Thai. The universal truth of the Bible is inculcated in every culture that has a 7 day week.

The oldest prediction of a coming Savior who would offer a sacrifice for sin and conquer evil is found in the Book of Genesis, where God promised Adam that the "seed of the woman" (a Person born without a man's sperm) will arrive and reverse the effects of the man's sin and fall. This special

messenger has been expected in many cultures which call Him *Mashiach* in Hebrew, *al-Masih* in Arabic, *Messiah* in English, *Maitreya* in Sanskrit, *Metteya* in Pali, *Pra-Med-trai* in Thai, *Miroku* in Japanese, and *Miruk* in Korean. God's promise of hope has been etched in the memory of mankind, no matter what language he speaks.

One of the most important truths from the Bible is the power of calling upon the "Name" of the Lord. When sinful men lost touch with God, their earliest form of worship was by calling upon God's Name. Long before Sikhs or Hare Krishnas adopted the idea of calling on God's Name, the Bible records that from the earliest times, since the third generation from Adam, "Then men began to call on the name of the LORD." (Genesis 4:26) The New Testament instructs us that by calling on the Name of Jesus, anyone can be saved from their sins! "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:21) Peter preached in his first sermon about Jesus, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) Is it any surprise that the word for 'name' is one of the most uniform sounds in all languages? *Nom* in French, *nombre* Spanish, *naam* Hindi, *nam* Thai, *nanme* Burmese, *nama* Indonesian, *namae* Japanese. The widespread similarity is hard to miss.

One final interesting parallel. The patriarchs of the Bible – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – knew God by a particular name: *Shaddai*. They lived about 4000 years ago or 500 years before the time of Moses. One of the most ancient cultures in the world – the Chinese – called God by this name: *Shan Ti*. The resemblance is uncanny and obviously adds credence to the fact that the first Chinese who settled in China came from Babel with the knowledge of God Almighty. Later God revealed to Moses, "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty [*El Shaddai*], but by My name, LORD [*Jehovah*], I was not known to them." (Exodus 6:3) The ancients knew Him as *Shaddai* or *Shan Ti*, but the modern believers know Him as *Jehovah* or *Jesus!* Jesus is a Greek form of the Hebrew name *Joshua*, literally "Lord Who Saves!" What a name for the Savior of the world!

To return to our original topic, the *Tripitaka* is the main sacred text of Buddhism. However, just as Muslims depend on the *Hadith* to illuminate the *Koran*, so too Buddhists refer to non-canonical commentaries to shed light on the *Tripitaka*.

To add to the lack of uniformity in Buddhism, there are many versions of the *Tripitaka* – Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, Cambodian, Thai, *etc.* Unlike the Bible, all versions do not refer to the same stories.[132] The Tibetan version contains stories not found elsewhere and secret teachings. The Chinese version is probably the most copious, amounting to 120 times the size of the Bible![133] Compare this to the Pali Canon, which is still a hefty volume, weighing in at 15 times the size of the Bible.[134] The most conservative one is the Pali Canon.

No one is sure when the *Tripitaka* was written. The teachings were first transmitted orally, and then compiled anywhere between 247BC-500AD, which is as late as a thousand years after the time of Buddha! The earliest Thai manuscripts on record date from 1477; but most manuscripts date much later from the 1800s onwards.

Based on the lateness of the Buddhist texts, I suspect that the dominant Hindu religion had plenty of time to reassert its influence on the religion of a Hindu heretic. Buddha did not follow Hinduism or its idols. I question some teachings attributed to Buddha, such as later assertions of his miraculous powers or belief in reincarnation. They sound more like Hinduism amalgamating into Buddhism. They simply don't align with a man searching for a way out of suffering, and rejecting Hinduism as that true way.

It is interesting to note that Westerners rarely question the reliability of Buddha's story, but feel obliged to incessantly discredit the reliability of Jesus' story. Their rejection is not based on facts, but on ignorance or prejudice. In contrast to the *Tripitaka*, all of the New Testament was written by eye witnesses of Christ within 100 years of the events, and the earliest manuscripts on record date from the first century. No other piece of historical literature is as well attested to as the Bible.

The Three Baskets The *Tripitaka* contains 40 books (Burmese edition), 45 books (Thai edition), or 57 books (Pali edition) categorized into 3 sections, or literally 3 baskets.

The first basket is about **Discipline**: *Winayan* in Thai or *Vinaya* in Pali. Books 1 to 8 of the Thai edition belong to the *Winai-pidok* (Thai) or *Vinaya-pitaka* (Pali). They contain the rules and laws that a Buddhist needs to keep in order to escape sin and go to Heaven. There are lots and lots of rules and laws to keep. What's interesting is that when Westerners teach about Buddhism as a

religion of peace and freedom, they rarely emphasize these rules. The very first and most important part of the *Tripitaka* are the rules. Without following the moral laws you can never escape karma or its consequent suffering.

The second part is about **Doctrine**: *Tamma* in Thai or *Dharma* in Sanskrit, meaning truth or teachings. This section contains the *sutras* or stories of Buddha and his disciples. For this reason it is also known as the *Sutras* (Sanskrit for threads) or *Sutta* (Pali for threads). Buddha taught for about 45 years, and then his disciples continued to teach and recount the stories that he taught. Altogether these form the Buddhist teachings or *tamma*, considered very important. Books 9 to 33 belong to the *Suttata-pidok* (Thai) or *Sutta-pitaka* (Pali).

The third part is a **Commentary** on the Doctrine: *Abhi-tamma* in Thai or *Abhi-dharma* in Sanskrit. The name literally means "beyond the dharma" or "higher tamma". This section attempts to explain, reword and reorganize the stories into a systematic theology. Books 34 to 45 belong to the *Abhi-tamma-pidok* (Thai) or *Abhidhamma-pitaka* (Pali).

The *Abhidharma* was collected hundreds of years after Buddha died. In Sri Lanka and Myanmar the *Abhidharma* is more venerated, however in Thailand it plays a minor role compared to the first two parts. This third section is very dense and difficult to understand. It is a more theoretical and philosophical part of the *Tripitaka*, so most Buddhists never read it. If they do want to know something about it, they might read commentaries on the Commentary.

COMPARING THE BIBLE WITH THE TRIPITAKA The Bible and the *Tripitaka* should not be viewed as two competing books. The *Tripitaka* contains the history of one part of the world, India, while the Bible contains the history of another part of the world, Israel.

The subject of the *Tripitaka* is man. The subject of the Bible is God.

The *Tripitaka* is full of instructions for one to be a better person, but does not address questions like where we came from, where we are heading, or what is the purpose of life. The Bible answers all these questions without contradicting the instructions for people to be good. The 10 Commandments of Moses (1500 BC) are repeated in 4 out of 5 moral laws of Buddha (550 BC) and even God's prohibition against idolatry (Moses' 2nd commandment) is repeated

elsewhere in Buddha's teachings (Pali: *appa-mano* don't make idols! *a-mita-bucha* don't worship materially!).

The Bible is written in common language and considered every Christian's handbook for salvation. The *Tripitaka* is written in a foreign language or translated into very high archaic language that the average person does not understand. This is being changed as newer editions of the *Tripitaka* are being revised, but apart from a few stories taught to children in schools, the *Tripitaka* will always be considered the domain of monks and scholars. By sheer size of its volume (45 books), the general public will never read it, at least not in the same way a Christian mum, businessman or pastor would pick up the Bible and read it every day. Many Christian families read through the entire Bible together every year! This is completely impractical for the typical Buddhist family.

Lastly, the *Tripitaka* is full of instructions for controlling the flesh. (Even meditation which has a spiritual goal starts out with controlling the flesh. Being a monk means renouncing the flesh, shaving the head, and wearing a robe.) It is working from outside in. The Bible is full of instructions for sinners to repent and believe God from the heart. God works from inside out. This does not contradict the *Tripitaka*. It only works from a different direction. God wants to change our spirits first. Even if you did everything right in the flesh, when you die you would still go to Hell, because your spirit is unsaved. God deals with our nature by replacing it with His own Son's.

How We Got the Bible & the Tripitaka There are at least 5 important differences between the history of how the Bible and the *Tripitaka* came to be.

Firstly, the *Tripitaka* was passed down orally, whereas the Bible was quite literally set in stone from the beginning! God wrote the first 10 Commandments on 2 tablets of stone, then instructed Moses to record every word of God and the history of His dealing with the new nation of Israel. From ancient times, Israel was a 100% literate society. Moses was commanded to write[135], parents were commanded to write[136], kings were commanded to write[137], and prophets were commanded to write[138]. The written record of God's Word multiplied rapidly among religious and secular people. In contrast, the *Tripitaka* was committed to memory. For a long time it was required that all monks recite the 227 laws of the *Winai-pidok* every 15 days. Failure to do so meant punishment.

Secondly, when the *Tripitaka* was written, two unique things happened. One, it was written in a language that had no writing system – *Pali.* This meant that Pali had to be transliterated into several Indian and Asian writing systems. Two, the texts were written on palm leaves[139] tied together by a string[140]. They look like a Chinese fan when it's folded up, only larger. There were thousands of these!

In contrast, the Bible was from early on written on papyrus, animal skins, and copper plates. All three examples can be found among the Dead Sea Scrolls which date from 250 BC to 100 AD. In the dry atmosphere of the desert, Biblical texts were very well preserved. In the humid weather of Asia, palm leaves did not survive well. Most of them have rotted. Therefore we no longer have the originals with which to compare the present version of the *Tripitaka*.

Thirdly, unlike the Bible, the *Tripitaka* was never published in one single volume until the 20th century. Thousands of palm leaves existed before and there is no way to tell if all the palm leaves were faithfully copied and collected into the present *Tripitaka*.

Fourthly, unlike the Bible, the *Tripitaka* was not classified into chapters and verses. Any Christian can find a Bible reference by being told its chapter and verse. These are unchanging in every Bible in every language. References to the *Tripitaka* differ greatly depending on which version of the *Tripitaka* a monk was referring to. If he was looking at palm leaves, he might reference them as *pook*[141] *1, 2, 3, etc* or by a story title known to the listener. However, if he was reading from a bound book, he would tell his fellow monks to turn to such page and go to such line. Of course, pages and lines might differ between different editions of the *Tripitaka*. Today, one can find a *Tripitaka* online with clear paragraph numbers, but this is a recent development.

The lack of a single universal classification means two things for us. One, it is not easy to find old references to Buddhist stories. Secondly, there is simply no way to guarantee that every story and every line from the original *Tripitaka* has been faithfully transmitted to the present version.

The Jewish rabbis, on the other hand, knew the exact number of Hebrew letters in the *Torah* (Hebrew for "Law" or the first five books of the Bible). The number of letters in the *Torah* is 304,805. That's how we know the Bible was faithfully transmitted letter by letter and why Bible codes (equi-distant letter codes) are possible. If one letter went missing, any code intentionally placed by the Author would fail. That is, any encoded message would be impossible to

decode. But we do find, in fact, many intelligent codes in the Bible, attesting not only to its supernatural origin, but absolutely faithful preservation.

Fifthly, unlike the Bible, the *Tripitaka* has undergone many major revisions and corrections. Besides all the minor corrections and updating which may happen as often as every 10 years, there have been overall reviews by Buddhist Councils. The Burmese claim that 6 Councils have met to agree on and revise Buddhist doctrines. Thais claim there were 9 councils in history.

One significant Council for the Thais, usually omitted from the official list, was called by the First King of Thailand[142] in order to salvage the Buddhist texts destroyed in an attack on *Ayutthaya* by the Burmese in 1767.

Chapter 28

End Times Predictions of Buddha & Jesus The Pursuit of Happiness

Westerners talk about Buddhism as if it's about personal happiness, finding peace within oneself, or freeing one's mind. All that sounds like Buddhism, but it isn't.

I've read claims by Westerners who are trying to practice Buddhism that Buddha said one day Buddhism will bring world peace. In other words, if everyone became Buddhist, the result would be world peace. Nothing of the sort can be found in the *Tripitaka*.

Here is one of Buddha's predictions[151]. It is Buddha's prophecy of the deterioration of truth: "*Buddha revealed to Pra-Maha-Gasapa Tayra, "Behold, Gasapa, the teaching of morals*[152] *will slowly and gradually deteriorate. Just as the quality of food deteriorates little by little, year by year, and people do not notice, so too will they not notice when the teaching of truth deteriorates."*

This is similar to what Jesus teaches in the "Kingdom Parables". In Matthew chapter 13 Jesus gives seven parables that describe the Kingdom of God. Some people misinterpret the Seven Kingdom Parables and think they are about how Christianity will become bigger and bigger until the whole world becomes Christian. But Jesus, as a Jewish rabbi, paints a different picture.

He says in one story, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven" (Matthew 13:33). Any Jewish listener recognizes, "Oh-oh, that doesn't sound so good. The story is already sounding bad," because leaven is a Jewish symbol of sin and corruption. Jesus continues, "Which [leaven] a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened." In other words, the leaven seeped through and corrupted the whole lump of dough. It's painting a picture of the Kingdom of God on earth: it starts out with truth but then false doctrines get inserted in, along with immoral practices, sins, lack of discipline, disrespect for authority, and whatever other things represented by leaven.

Older preachers I know have observed that one of the differences between believers of today and those of previous generations is the modern believers' general lack of commitment. Jesus predicted such a careless state of His church 2000 years ago. Jesus said the church will progressively deteriorate

to the point that when He returns, He will ask, “Will I find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). He says brother will turn against brother, father against sons, people will be delivering up their own families to court and to death.[153] That’s the message of Jesus’ Kingdom Parables: **Left to ourselves, we will never reach perfection, but always corruption.**

Jesus says in another parable, “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree…” (Matthew 13:31). Anyone in Israel listening to Jesus has to say, “Oh-oh, You are talking about an abnormality of nature. There is no mustard plant thet is as big as a tree! A mustard plant is a shrub that you can walk through. It’s yellow and small, it’s just an herb.”

Jesus teaches us that the kingdom of God will grow abnormally large until “the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.” Now the Gentile Christian says, “Wow, that sounds great!” Many Gentile preachers get excited and proclaim, “The church is going to overtake the world and it will be awesome! Even birds will come and find rest in the shade of the branches.” But we must let the Bible interpret its own idioms. What do the “birds” here refer to? In the first parable describing a sower and four soils, the birds refer to Satan and his demons (Matthew 13:4,19).

The Bible says that Jesus predicts the truth will become so corrupted in the End Times, devils and demons will be attending some churches. There will be false doctrines preached from the pulpit. Are we seeing that today? Are we now seeing some churches taking votes on whether they should ordain a homosexual as pastor? Should they not be consulting the Word of God and obeying the Spirit of God? How far have we strayed from God’s ideal for us. **Left to ourselves, we will never reach perfection, but always corruption.**

I am not at all fatalistic about my faith. I believe those who believe will “go from strength to strength” (Psalm 84:7) and “those who know their God shall be strong and carry out great exploits” (Daniel 11:32). But if we are approaching or are in fact already in the *Laodicean* age (symbolized by the last of the seven churches of Revelation), we must be on special guard against pride of denomination and walk in Christian love. How we need to be devoted to God’s Word every day.

What kind of picture does the rest of the Bible paint about the end of the age? Is it one of the church overtaking the world? Will everyone be flocking to

hear and practice the truth? Will the church at large stand uncompromised? This is what the Holy Spirit says: **1 TIMOTHY 4:1 (KJV) 1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some shall DEPART from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.**

O, don't be surprised if the Bible says some will voluntarily leave their faith, don't be surprised! In the latter times some are not going to have to be forced, some are going to voluntarily leave! It won't be the Antichrist threatening them to "renounce Jesus or I'll put a bullet to your head." It will be more like one fine day, the churchgoer who did not ground his faith solidly in the Word of God will think to himself, "I no longer want to be restricted by church and faith, I no longer want to be committed to my brothers and sisters, I want to do what I want to do!"

My point is this: Western humanism paints a picture that people can create peace, clean up the environment, cure diseases, and defeat poverty, all without God and without Jesus Christ. Evidence contradicts this theory. Evidence shows more and worse wars, more and worse pollution, more and worse diseases, and more and worse injustices. This is the deterioration of truth. I am very positive about the future of Bible believers. I believe some of the best preachers, teachers, and churches exist all over the world today! I believe the best is yet to come! But the world at large is about to see terrible days ahead because of its rejection of the truth. Buddha's prediction was not so far off from what Jesus teaches us about the End Times.

Jesus says over and over that when He comes back He will find the world in a state of unpreparedness. So what should we be doing? We should have our lamps burning and our oil topped up. Keep your spiritual fire on for the Lord! Keep your heart burning with passion for Jesus! Keep praying and seeking God in public and in your closet. Remember to keep your heart on the job because the temptation to be complacent and indifferent will be at its greatest as the Second Coming draws near. Many people will fall away and many will believe only what they want to hear - it's called "itching ears."

2 TIMOTHY 4:3-5

3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have ITCHING EARS, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

4 and they will TURN their ears AWAY FROM THE TRUTH, and be turned aside to fables.

5 BUT YOU be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Mankind needs help. When left without an instructor, man is generally

not good at anything - reading, writing, swimming, swinging a golf club, being polite, much less acting morally and developing spiritually. As mankind fulfills the prophecy of "itching ears," desiring less and less to follow God's Word, the world will sink into a time of turmoil. Rather than an increase of peace, which humanism promises, the world will experience an increase of family breakdown, health crisis, financial debt, social rebellion, and natural upheaval (earthquakes, tsunamis, solar flares, meteor impacts). There will be no peace until the Prince of Peace - Jesus Christ - returns to establish peace on the earth.

Buddha agreed with this End Times scenario. Buddha defined the timeline of the Deterioration as follows: "*When the Buddhist religion is 1,000 years old, there will be no monk who has penetrating insight.*[154]

> *When the Buddhist religion is 2,000 year old, there will be no monk who can fly or walk on air*[155]*. People will turn to the* ***worship of idols****, spirit ghosts and devils.*[156] *This is* ***a delusion***[157] ***that will cause people to fall and go to Hell****.*
>
> *When the Buddhist religion is 3,000 year old, there will be no wisdom among men and the earth will be hot like fire.*[158]
>
> *When the Buddhist religion is 5,000 year old, there will be no monk who can reach the highest level of priesthood. The world will be destroyed by fire*[159]*."*

It is fascinating how often Buddha and the Bible sound similar. The destruction of the world by fire is also predicted in the Bible. However, the timeline of the Bible puts the end sooner.[160]

> **2 PETER 3:7-12**
>
> **7 But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are RESERVED FOR FIRE until the DAY OF JUDGMENT and PERDITION of ungodly men.**
>
> **8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.**
>
> **9 The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that ALL SHOULD COME TO REPENTANCE.**
>
> **10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will MELT with FERVENT HEAT; both the earth and the works that are in it will be BURNED UP.**
>
> **11 Therefore, since all these things will be DISSOLVED, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be DISSOLVED, being ON FIRE, and the elements will MELT with FERVENT HEAT?**

Buddha named the five stages of the Deterioration (in Pali): *Pa-ri-yat-ti-tam untaratarn* – the deterioration of moral teaching (Thai: *tamma*, Pali: *dhamma*, Sanskrit: *dharma*).

Pa-ti-bat untaratarn - the deterioration of moral practice.

Pa-ti-wade untaratarn – the deterioration of enlightened thinking or the right way to obtain good results.

Sangka untaratarn - the deterioration of the monkhood.

Untaratarn - the deterioration of the bones of Buddha.

The Buddhist and Biblical predictions of the deterioration of morals and physical matter[161] are important to us for at least three reasons.

First, it was not obvious to everybody else. What is surprising is that most cultures throughout history did not teach their children this observable process of Deterioration, but rather taught them to believe that man could create his own Utopia. The ancient Chinese Taoists searched for the Elixir of Life, a potion to keep humans young forever, basically trying to defy the Second Law of Thermodynamics. (Entropy states that the universe is moving from a state of order to a state of disorder.) Young Charles Darwin thought lifeless things could beget life[162], plants could beget animals, fish could beget reptiles, reptiles could beget birds, monkeys could beget humans, whereas all evidence shows we are constantly losing old species (as entropy predicts) and not gaining *any* new ones (as evolutionists should expect).

If evolution were true, why should anyone care about extinction? Old species should be disappearing all throughout evolutionary history; while new species should be appearing on a regular basis! Christians care about the extinction of species because no new ones will appear! “A righteous man regards the life of his animal” (Proverbs 12:10). The observable fact is we are not gaining ANY more new species since they were first created!

God said every plant and animal will reproduce “after its own kind”. In other words, “like begets like,” microbes beget microbes, elephants beget elephants, humans beget humans, and elephants will never beget humans. Unfortunately Darwin did not have the benefit of understanding modern physics because he was formulating his ideas[163] on biology at the same time as physicists were arriving at the Laws of Thermodynamics in the 1850s.

Scientists have recently caught up with the fact that in our fallen world, entropy is law. Buddha spoke of entropy over two millennia ago and the Bible

spoke of it in detail over three millennia ago! The wisdom of God may seem foolish to the world but "wisdom is justified by all her children" (Luke 7:35).

Second, the prediction of Deterioration contradicts modern secular assumptions. The world believes that apart from God, we can make our own future bright. World War II was supposed to be "the war to end all wars." The United Nations was to bring peace to the Middle East and stop dictators. The World Health Organization was to eradicate all diseases. How has this modern wisdom done so far? It seems that we should be heeding God's wisdom instead! We keep trying to build our Towers of Babel to reach Heaven by ourselves! All human efforts to reach Utopia without God is based on human pride rather than godly humility, and will end in confusion and division.

The Good News is God wants us to succeed. Humility and faith towards God's Word are the keys to success. God said, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (3 John 1:2 KJV). Here's how, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way PROPSEROUS, and then you will have GOOD SUCCESS" (Joshua 1:8). I found this to be true in my own life: the harder I try on my own, the more time I waste. But the more time I spend in God's Word, the more time I save and the greater success I find.

My third observation about the End Times predictions of Buddha and Jesus is that they contradict Western assumption about Buddhism. Westerners assume Buddhism is about peace. I want to correct this common misconception. Neither Buddha nor Jesus predicted peace and happiness in the End Times, but a deterioration of peace and happiness, especially for everyone who has karma and sin, and refuses to repent.

Buddhism is certainly not about Buddha bringing world peace to the earth. Buddhism is not about the goal of achieving personal happiness. Buddha did not teach this. This is Western humanism hijacking Buddhism. What is Buddhism really about?

The goal of Buddhism is summarized in two words in Thai: *pon tuk*. They mean to be set free from the horrible consequences of sin, or literally, "escape suffering". The cycle of suffering is called *gongjak chiwit*: this is what Buddhism is concerned about!

Buddhism is about finding the way to be free from the vicious cycle of suffering. These two statements may sound similar: 'I want to be free from sin'

and ‘I want to find happiness,’ but they’re not aiming for the same goals. Buddha was concerned about being free from the consequences of sin. His heart and mind were focused on the biggest problem that will ruin our future, not on pursuing “what makes me feel happy today.”

If Buddhism were about earthly happiness, I can tell you that Siddhartha Gautama was already quite happy as a young man. He had everything most people could ever dream of. How would you feel if you were born a prince with three different palaces for each of the three seasons, you were given a wife at the tender age of sixteen, and you had not a care in the world? If Buddhism was about happiness, Siddhartha would have stayed in his royal palaces!

It’s necessary to make this clear because Westerners do not teach nor reveal this about Buddhism. Here’s why I think they probably never will. Many Westerners who did not grow up with Buddhism, but take an interest in it later in life, tend to embrace Buddhism as an alternative to Christianity. Buddhism is a way of saying, “I didn’t like the church my parents belonged to, I didn’t like the boring services I was forced to attend, and now I reject that, so I’m embracing something that’s called Buddhism instead,” without fully knowing what Buddhism is. They never actually studied Buddhism deeply enough to understand that Buddhism is probably more like Christianity than any other religion in the world! Buddha would have agreed with much of the Old Testament and embraced the gift of the New Testament. If Buddha were alive today, I am convinced he would be in church and love hearing the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Contrary to the popular Western view of Buddhism, personal happiness was certainly not a goal of Buddha. Buddha was concerned with one thing: suffering (Thai: *tuk*, Pali: *tukka*). What was the cause of suffering? Karma, which is sin. He searched all his life to find the way out of sin. Doesn’t that sound a lot like Christianity? Only Buddha never found the solution, he never came to a stage where he said, “I’ve got it, do this and you’ll be free from karma.” In Christianity we are given the greatest promise by Jesus, “Believe in Me and I will give you eternal life” (John 3:36). A solution is given through Christ’s costly blood sacrifice for all karma.

CHRISTIAN QUESTIONS

Chapter 32

Is Buddha in Heaven?

We have discovered that Buddha had a lot of insight. Buddha taught the four great truths which parallel what the Bible teaches. The first two truths are the themes of the Old Testament; the final two truths are the subjects of the New Testament.

We have discovered that Buddha taught the parable of the four lotus, which sounds a lot like Jesus' parable of the four soils. Buddha compared humanity to four different levels of lotus. Jesus compared the human heart to four different types of soils. Both of them were saying that not everyone we preach to is going to bear fruit; only about one quarter of the people who read or hear instruction will actually be paying attention and applying the lessons to their lives.

It's very interesting how much Jesus and Buddha had in common. Christians can't deny the fact that Buddha discovered some truths. However, Christians shouldn't blindly accept everything Buddhism or any other religion says.

I believe that people who sincerely search for truth will come across some light. For the Bible says that if you search for God you will find Him.

JEREMAIH 29:13

13 And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

This question used to bother me, "What happens to people who live in the Amazon or some remote part of the earth who never had the chance to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ?" It's no longer a big puzzle to me. If anyone truly *wants* to know the truth, God will spare no resource to send them a messenger (a person, a book, a CD, a video) which will proclaim Christ to them. I am convinced that God is fair to everyone who searches for Him with all their heart.

God has answered my question not only through His Word, but by taking me to the Amazon! I think God has a sense of humor. I can report that while many Western intellectuals think the "primitive people" are ignorant of the Bible, many of them have in fact already been evangelized. Meanwhile those

who live in big modern cities often have the easiest access to good Biblical teaching, but are completely ignorant of the New Testament truths.

Not knowing God is not a problem of geography, but an issue of the human heart. No matter where we are or what time period we live in, God is able to reach our hearts if we truly *want* Him. Do you really think He could resist a repentant heart when He sees it?

PSALM 34:18

18 The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.

I cannot draw a conclusion about Buddha's eternal status because I don't know him personally. None of us know Buddha's heart. All we know are stories that have been passed down for over two thousand years. He could have been a man who truly searched for the living God. And if he had searched with all his heart, there's a promise in the Bible written since 600BC, "Seek Me, and you will find Me." I think this applies to Buddha as well as to any of us. There is evidence, particularly from his last words, that Buddha may have had a relationship with God.

Chapter 34

What Would Buddha Say?

If Buddha could speak today, what would he say? I believe Buddha would continue to tell people to look for a way to avoid Hell at any cost. He was willing to leave his caste, leave his wealth, leave his religion, leave his ancestor's man-made traditions, and suffer any price to be set free from karma. [171]

How many Buddhists are willing to leave all to find salvation? Jesus said this is what is required. In Matthew 5:29-30, Jesus told the world to avoid Hell at any cost: "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into Hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into Hell." Jesus and Buddha agreed that any price, any persecution, is worth missing the eternal flames of Hell. Jesus and Buddha had much in common!

If Buddha had the chance, he would have rejoiced to converse with a Christian and ponder with gratitude the thought that his Creator has suffered the punishment of all sins for humanity. Perhaps Buddha saw this, or else how could he have prophesied so precisely about the Coming Savior? God does not dwell in the realm of time. God saw Jesus Christ as "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). Could God not have shown this to Buddha before it happened in time?

If Buddha were alive today, I have no doubt in my mind that he would be in church and reading the Bible. If Buddha were alive today, he would say to Buddhists, "Reform your religion. Stop bowing down to idols. I left Hinduism because I detested its myriad of idols. Stop playing with superstitions.[172] I taught you to reason. Have a conversation with a Christian. Meditate deeply on the price that the only sinless King paid for the redemption of all slaves. Be thankful to Christ. He did what no one else could have done." These would be the last words of Buddha.

APPENDIX How reliable are the records of Buddhist prophecies and stories?

No one can prove what Buddha originally taught. Unlike Christians, Buddhists simply do not have original manuscripts that date to the time of Buddha. Nor can anyone prove that the current Buddhist teachings have not been corrupted after 2500 years. All we can do is piece together the evidence forensically to the best of our ability.

I am grateful for the efforts of one former monk *Tongsuk Siriruk* who in 1954 recorded some of Buddhist stories that are useful for Christians. Others have questioned his credibility.

While I have no interest to defend him, my interest is only to defend the Gospel, some comments from me may be appropriate since the deceased man cannot answer for himself. Tongsuk left the Buddhist monkhood and became a Christian. Anyone who leaves his traditions will have critics. (Buddha had his critics when he abandoned Hinduism.) But despite the criticism, I think his material is worth looking at.

First, Tongsuk received permission from *Pra-Siwisuttiwong* (deputy abbot in Bangkok) to copy the *Tripitaka* in *Wat-Prasing*[173] in Chiangmai. His copy was certified as accurate by his village head on 13 October 1954.

Second, Chiangmai is the historical location of the authorized Pali text in Thailand, which was revised at the Thai 8th Buddhist Council in 1477. Where better to copy the original Buddhist texts?

Third, Tongsuk referred to Buddhist texts with antiquated terms such as *Praputta-jarot Pook 5*. *Praputta-jarot* means “words of Buddha”. *Pook* here refers to palm leafs (*bai lan)* tied together (*pook*) by one string (*sai sanong*). This was the old way of keeping Buddhist texts. Modern monks no longer refer to *pook* but to books (*lem*).

Fourth, Tongsuk referred to the *Kampee Khom* or Cambodian (Khmer) Sacred Text. The Mon-Khmer people were the dominant people group living in the area extending from present day Myanmar to Cambodia; they were the first Theravada Buddhists in Southeast Asia. When the Tai people, which includes people from Hainan (south-eastern island of China) to Assam (north-eastern state of India), immigrated[174] to present day Thailand, they brought with them

beliefs in Mahayana Buddhism. Thais converted to Theravada[175] after coming into contact with the Mon-Khmers. The Thai alphabet came from the Khmer alphabet[176]. Thai Buddhism came from Khmer Buddhism. Therefore it seems likely that we would find the earliest, unabridged stories of Buddha from the Khmer Text.

Fifth, every teaching Tongsuk referred to is standard Buddhist doctrine. What may be found in today's *Tripitaka*, he communicated faithfully and accurately. There is no reason to doubt him when he recorded what may no longer be found in later versions of the *Tripitaka*.

Sixth, Tongsuk was a genuine Buddhist monk who became a genuine follower of Jesus Christ. No believer wants to lie, for in both Buddhism and Christianity, "all liars will have their part in the lake of fire."

Seventh, there were 2261 years between the Third Council (where the Theravada text was agreed upon) and the Last Council in Burma (where modern revisions were made). If doubt was to be cast on anything, it should be cast on the latest revision. Since Christianity was well known by the 20th century, some stories that sounded too Christian may have been removed from the Buddhist texts. I do not say that this was done deliberately or maliciously, but may had been done subconsciously or sincerely to prevent confusion.

Eighth, the critics tend to be young and do not remember that many Thai elders talked of Buddha's predictions of the One coming after him who will have scars in His hands, feet, and side. This is common knowledge among the older generation. I have talked to many Buddhists who are familiar with this prophecy. It is impossible that they were all "evangelized" during the early 20th century, since we are now well into the 21st century and still less than 1% of Thailand is evangelical Christian. It is more likely they were getting their information from early Buddhist texts.

Ninth, if we go back to the root of Buddhism, which was Hinduism, we can find similar predictions of the coming Savior of the world. This is common knowledge among Hindus who study the Vedas. I have asked several of my Indian friends if they have heard of Buddha's own prediction of the coming Savior with pierced hands, feet and side, and they have told me it is common knowledge. If that knowledge has survived in India for 2500 years, and non-Buddhists can still recall it, should not the older Buddhists still recall this story?

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[1] The Latin Bible is called the *Vulgate* and was the official Bible of the Catholic Church until 1979.
[2] The Protestant Reformation officially started in 1517 when Martin Luther *protested* the Catholic ideas that the Pope was infallible, the church could sell salvation (called 'indulgences'), and no one but the clergy could understand the Bible. Protestants emphasize that the Bible is the only infallible source of truth, salvation is by faith in Christ alone, and everyone in the world who *wants* to understand the Bible can. Interestingly, one of the most common questions Buddhists ask is, "What's the difference between Catholic and Protestant?"
[3] The Bible continues to be the most translated book in the world. God's Word exists in over 2300 languages out of the 6000+ known languages, and can now be accessed in many hotels, over the Internet and even by cellular phones! http://www.biblesociety.org/latestnews/latest232-slr2002stats.html [4] Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council decided to permit the use of the vernacular in masses (or Catholic services). Prior to that, the commoner did not understand what was said in service!
[5] Asians refer to Pali-Sanskrit the way Westerners refer to Greco-Roman. Although they are two different and separate influences, yet throughout history, they have become inextricably intertwined.
[6] Hawaii contains a large population of Chinese, Japanese and Korean immigrants, most of whom are some type of Buddhist.
[7] Thai: *pla lai.*

[8] Some Westerners may be quite happy to never eat eel, but many Asians love it. The Japanese grill it with Teriyaki sauce and it is quite nice.
[9] Thai: *Platoo Nam.*
[10] Thai for "to pay back for the release of sin." *Sadau* literally means hit, beat, or chase out. *Kro* is short for *kro gum wain gum*, literally "unexpected evil of karma; revenge of karma," or simply "evil karma retributive karma." *Sadau kro* requires performance of a good deed that usually involves buying something; *e.g.* buying birds or eels and releasing them. This probably descended from the Old Testament practice of releasing the scapegoat into the wilderness (Leviticus 16:22) and releasing a clean bird dipped in blood into the open field (Leviticus 14:6). The Old Testament practice predated Buddha by 3000 years, and was codified by the time of Moses 1000 years before Buddha. Southeast Asia, of course, doesn't have native goats, so they could have substituted the Biblical practice with other things like pigs, chicken, eels or even flowers. If you don't want to perform the deed, you can pay a monk to do it for you.
[11] Thai: *buad* or become a nun.
[12] In Buddhist countries, many taxi drivers place idols on their car dashboard in hope of protection. I have often wondered how effective this superstition could be since in any head on collision, the idols would nearly always be first to break through the windshield!
[13] Matthew 2:2, 8:2, 14:33, 28:9, 17; John 13:12, 20:28-29
[14] John 3:15-16, 36; 5:24, 6:47.
[15] Thai: *nippan.*
[16] Thai: *duang.*
[17] Thai: *suoy.*
[18] Einstein's *General Theory of Relativity* proves that time and matter are connected, therefore if matter had a beginning, then time also had a beginning. Since everything that has a beginning has a cause, the beginning of time and matter demand a First Cause.
The *Second Law of Thermodynamics* or *Entropy* states that the universe is declining from a state of order to disorder, therefore an infinitely old universe would be infinitely disorderly (with no life or usable energy left). Since there are order, biological information and usable energy, the universe cannot be infinitely old, but must have had a beginning. Someone in the beginning ordered it.
[19] You can read about the different sects of Buddhism in the chapter *Which Denomination?*
[20] Thai: *Pra-see-ariya-med-trai-yo*, which Thais like to shorten to either *Pra-see-arn* or *Pra-med-trai*.
[21] According to the Bible Peter was married (Mark 1:30) and the other apostles were married (1 Cor 9:5). Although Paul wasn't married, he recommended to both Titus and Timothy to find bishops who were (1 Tim 3:1-2, Titus 1:6-7) and commended marriage as honourable (Heb 13:4). There is no Biblical command to not marry, and one that specifically says to *not* forbid marriage (1 Tim 4:2-3).
[22] This is probably a corruption of the true Messianic prophecy. Even the name *Maitriya* is reminiscent of the *Messiah.* The Jews, Muslims, and some Buddhists, rightly believe that there is a Perfect, Sinless One who will be coming back. His name is Jesus.
[23] There is a *Lumpini Park* in Bangkok named after Buddha's birthplace.
[24] *Brahmins* are nobles of the highest caste of Indian society. (Not to be confused with *brahmans* – the priests of Hindu religion.) These 8 *brahmins* were evidently prophets.
[25] Sanskrit: *Guandinya.* Pali: *Kondanna*.
[26] Unlike many Western countries which have 4 seasons, that part of the world has only 3 seasons: hot, cold and rainy.
[27] His mother's niece.
[28] Sanskrit: *avidya*. Pali: *avijja*. English: delusion, ignorance. Related to *maya*, which for Hindus is the illusion or fleeting reality of life and the universe. In both Buddhism and Christianity, there can be no salvation unless one sees there is more to life than what we see. God and Heaven are real.
[29] The goal of being liberated from suffering is called *moksha* or *mukti*.
[30] For a full survey of world religions and cults on DVD, please visit www.discover.org.au/catalog.
[31] *Sujata* actually thought he was a ghost because he was so emaciated.

[32] This type of fig tree is large like a banyan tree and is known locally as the *Bodhi tree*.
[33] December 8 is celebrated as the day Siddhartha Gautama sat under the *Bodhi tree*.
[34] Sanskrit: *arhat*. Pali: *arahant*. English: one who has escaped *samsara* (reincarnation) and achieved *nirvana* (extinction).
[35] Pali-Sanskrit: *arya-sangha*. English: noble company of monks.
[36] 1 Corinthians 15:6, Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-8
[37] Acts 1:15
[38] In a similar way, [39] Proverbs 8:17, Jeremiah 29:13, Matthew 7:7-8
[40] By comparison, Jesus ministered for 3 ½ years and produced more leaders and believers than anyone before Him or since. When his first disciple Peter preached for the first time, 3000 became Christian (Acts 2:41). After his second sermon, 5000 became Christian (Acts 4:4).
[41] Pali-Sanskrit word meaning 'bliss'. Sometimes Ananda did substitute-teaching for Buddha. He is known in some Buddhist tradition as the second patriarch of Buddhism. From India to Thailand, *Ananda* has become a common boy's name because he was Buddha's favorite disciple.
[42] February 15 is Nirvana Day, commemorating Buddha's death. His passing was not marked by any particular miracle or sign of enlightenment, but by food poisoning. The Christian parallel is Easter or the Day of Resurrection, commemorating Jesus' triumph over man's greatest enemy. Jesus defeated death.
[43] Prior to Westernization, Buddhists did not use what we call the "Year of the Lord" or *Anno Domini* (A.D.) in Latin. Instead, Buddhists use the approximate date of Buddha's enlightenment as a starting point. If you would like to know what year it is on the Buddhist calendar, simply add 543 to the current year. For instance, the Christian year 2000 A.D. would be 2543 in some Buddhist countries.
[44] Pali: *ariyasaccani*. Sanskrit: *aryasatyani*. Thai: *ariya sat si*, literally "noble truths four".
[45] I will give the Thai pronunciation first, then the Pali-Sanskrit second.
[46] Indians call it *karma*. Thais call it *gum* or *wain gum* or to be most precise *kro gum wain gum*.
[47] Any parent knows that the free will of a child is very powerful. No matter how much you love your child and teach him right, if he chooses to trust in drug pushers or criminals, their mistrust of you and their trust in wrong friends could lead to death. On the other hand, their trust in your wisdom, even when they don't understand it yet, could save their lives. God like a good Father wants us to trust Him because our faith in Him will save us.
[48] Dictionary of the Royal Institute, Aksorn Chareon Taat Publisher, Bangkok, Edition 2525 (1982), authorized by the Thai Government and approved by the Army General & Prime Minister *Prame Tinasulanon*, p. 12.
[49] *Baab* is the Thai word for sin. Christians have traditionally preferred to use *baab* over the word *gum*, even though the second definition of *gum* tells us they are synonymous, and *gum* is more easily understood by Buddhists.
[50] Both Buddhism and Christianity teach we are sinners from the day we are born. Buddhism teaches that if we were perfect, we would not be born at all. We would cease from being reincarnated. The Bible says we inherited our nature or our spiritual DNA from our sinful parents – Adam & Eve. However, babies and children who die young never go to Hell because they are under the age of accountability. God does not hold them accountable until they know good from evil and choose evil voluntarily.
[51] Thai: *got hang gum.*
[52] Sanskrit: *moksha* or *mukti*.
[53] Literally cessation of existence, but many Buddhists also believe in Heaven and Hell. The Bible teaches clearly that there is a Heaven and Hell.
[54] Thai: *Samret arahan* or reach the highest level of life.
[55] Thai: *buad hai maa.*
[56] Thai: *gor pa lerng kern sawan.*
[57] Thai: *nang wipadsana.*
[58] Thai: *suoy.*
[59] Thai: *bpadt bpow* or literally "sweep blow".

[60] Thai: *mai kraup 32 suan.*
[61] Brahmanism teaches that the highest state of a human being is to be born a Brahmin or member of India's priestly caste. Only Brahmins have the privilege of teaching the Hindu sacred literature. Some use Brahmanism synonymously with Hinduism, while others believe it is one denomination within a larger religion. The nuance is up to the reader to decide, but the two share obvious similarities.
[62] Thai: *lut pon jag gum* = to be set free from the power of sin.
[63] The Sanskrit equivalent is *pancha shila*.
[64] *Benja seen* and *seen ha* are synonymous, but the latter is more commonly used nowadays.
[65] Dictionary of Buddhism (Thai-English), P.A. Payutto, University of Maha Chulalongkorn Ratchawitayarai, 2546 (2003), p. 175.
[66] *Ibid.* p. 175.
[67] *Ibid.* p. 175.
[68] Despite popular misunderstanding, Christianity is *not* a Western religion. Christianity originated in the East and today some of the largest churches in the world are in Asian countries like South Korea, Singapore and Indonesia. Some of most Christian regions in the world are in Asia, South Korea is 1/3 born again, Nagaland in northeastern India claims to be 80% born again. There are millions of Christians in the persecuted churches of China!
[69] *Bulgogi* is a delicious barbeque meat. Try it next time you're at a Korean restaurant!
[70] For more audio or video teachings on *Financial Breakthrough*, *Secrets of the Rich* or *business* as a call, please visit www.discover.org.au/catalog.
[71] Thai: *gumma bot sip (10).*
[72] Thai: *hon-taang hang gum sip (10) yaang serng ja tum hai mannut pai soo narok*.
[73] Thai: *maan*; Pali: *mara.*
[74] Thai: *dok pai nai grata-tongdang* [75] Thai: *peen ton ngew*. The scientific name for this tree *ton ngew* is the *Bombax ceiba*, a tropical tree whose trunk bears spikes and thorns.
[76] Sacred text of Buddhism. You can learn more about it in the chapter *The Three Baskets.*
[77] Thai: *kum.*
[78] Thai: *Baap na, ter ja tok Narok Away-jee!*
[79] *Kampan Sudcha* of the *Lower Isaan Foundation for Enablement (LIFE)* uses this style of witnessing.
[80] Matthew 25:41
[81] Luke 16:24 – I owe it to Jesus and Bill Wiese for helping me see how terrible Hell really is!
[82] Revelation 14:10
[83] Psalm 88:6
[84] Psalm 127:2, Revelation 14:11
[85] Psalm 88:8
[86] Hosea 13:8
[87] Psalm 106:41, Deuteronomy 28:29
[88] Revelation 13:6, John 15:18
[89] According to Barna Research, Oct 21, 2003. www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=150
[90] That is, go to Nirvana. Nirvana strictly means going out of existence, but if you say going to Heaven, many Buddhists would accept that.
[91] Thai: *kro gum wain gum* [92] Thai: *nippan*. Literally, cessation of existence.
[93] Scott Noble, *The Buddhist Road Map*, http://www.letusreason.org/Buddh7.htm, referring to Ernest Valea, *Past-life recall as modern proof for reincarnation*, www.comparativereligion.com/reincarnation1.html [94] Thai: *wain wai dai gerd*.
[95] The "One Child Policy" instituted by Deng Xiaoping in 1979 should properly be called the "One Birth Policy" because Chinese mothers are allowed to give birth to twins.
[96] Thailand has *mae chee's* or non-ordained women who have vowed celibacy and renounced worldly living.

[97] Thai: *seen.* Remember the minimum commandments for a Buddhist to keep are the 5 prohibitions or *seen ha*. This man kept more than the five! This is what this story is referring to – keeping all the *seen*.
[98] Thai: *pla siew*.
[99] Thai: *pla-jom* – a nice Asian dish.
[100] Thai: *tum*. Pali: *tamma*. Sanskrit: *dharma*.
[101] Thai: *boon*.
[102] Thai: *pit seen pana*.
[103] Do good deeds that count as "merit", such as feeding monks in the morning. Make merit.
[104] Working seven days a week, of course, is a sin. It breaks God's fourth commandment of keeping at least 1 day a week for God. It is a case of a sinner trying to sin his way out of sin. While he is working to pay off his sin, he adds more sins.
[105] The Hebrews start their day in rest, which is a type of Christ. It is out of rest or Christ that we have strength for each day. In Genesis chapter 1, God calls each "evening and morning," *not* "morning to evening," a full day. God never ends the day in darkness. With God, things always move from darkness to light, and our days always get brighter!
[106] Bloomberg.com, Kristin Hensen & Timothy Burger, *Clinton Earns $10.7 Million*, 14 June 2007.
[107] Romans 8:17, Galatians 4:7
[108] Romans 8:37
[109] Ephesians 1:20
[110] Wealth is more than money. It is time, peace of mind, protection from God, opportunities that money cannot buy. To grow in the knowledge of who you are and what you have in Christ, and your true authority because of Christ, I have compiled some empowering Scriptures in my booklet *Zoe Life Reality* available from www.discover.org.au/catalog.
[111] Thai: *gilead* or innate corruption.
[112] Full title: *Pra-see-ariya-med-trai-yo*, which Thais tend to shorten to either *Pra-see-arn* or *Pra-medtrai*.
[113] Thai: *prahm*, one of the Hindu priests.
[114] Thai: *asongkai*. This is an ancient word for an indefinitely long time. In context, the meaning of the word is unclear.
[115] Thai: *gongjak* – a sharp cutting wheel with jagged edges, an ancient weapon.
[116] Thai for *nirvana*.
[117] Thai: *nikai*, Pali: *nikaya*.
[118] Catholics and Protestants divided in 1517 over the issue of the Biblical authority and the Pope's power. Protestants believe in the supremacy of the Bible over all human institution. A similar divide occurred in 1054 between Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox, over a similar issue of the Roman Pope's power.
[119] There is a third and more nationalistic sect of Buddhism, called Tibetan Buddhism or Vajrayana, literally the Diamond Vehicle.
[120] A brief biography of King Asoka may be found the chapter *King Asoka & the Python.*
[121] Thai: *Hinayan*. *Hina* is Sanskrit for "little" and *yana* for "vehicle". *Hinayana* means Little Vehicle or path to enlightenment.
[122] Thai: *Terawad*.
[123] Thai: *Mahayan*. *Maha* is Sanskrit for "big" and *yana* for "vehicle". *Mahayana* means the Big Vehicle or path to enlightenment.
[124] Zen Buddhism was founded by *Bodhi—dharma*, an Indian monk in China who arrived in Japan in 538AD.
[125] Chinese: *Guan Yin*. Thai: *Guan Im*.
[126] *Vajra* is Sanskrit for "diamond" and *yana* for "vehicle".
[127] Called the Mahayana Sutras.
[128] A bodhisattva is a saintlike person who has postponed nirvana to help other attain enlightenment. In

practice, they are worshipped and prayed to like gods and goddesses who can grant wishes and protection.
[129] The most famous being the *Bardo Thodol* or the Tibetan Book of the Dead.
[130] *Dalai* is Mongolian for "Ocean" and *Lama* is Tibetan for "Guru or Monk".
[131] Matthew Philips, *China Regulates Buddhist Reincarnation*, Newsweek Aug 20-27, 2007. Available at: www.tibet.ca/en/wtnarchive/2007/8/23_5.html [132] All versions of the Bible in every language contain the same stories. (Some Catholic Bibles add a few extra books in the *Apocrypha*, but do not change the content of the universally accepted books.) The preservation of the Bible is a veritable miracle. Some people worry that the Bible may have been corrupted. However by 300BC, the Old Testament had been translated from Hebrew into Latin; and by 150AD, the New Testament had been translated from Greek into Latin, Syriac, Coptic, and many foreign languages. Since the Bible is the most translated and most quoted book in the world, for anyone to "doctor" it, they would not only have to change their own copy of the Bible, but thousands of others in many foreign languages and thousands of quotes made by scholars like Irenaeus, Origen, Tertullian… a feat that, if it were possible, would be a bigger miracle than God's ability to preserve the Bible's purity!
[133] http://www.akshin.net/literature/budlitsourceschina.htm [134]
http://www.akshin.net/literature/budlitsourcespali.htm [135] Exodus 17:14, 34:27, Deuteronomy 27:3
[136] Deuteronomy 11:20
[137] Deuteronomy 17:18
[138] Isaiah 8:1, 30:8, Jeremiah 30:2, Habakkuk 2:2, Luke 1:3, Revelation 1:11
[139] Thai: *bai lan*. Cambodian: *slek rit*.
[140] Thai: *sai sanong*.
[141] Thai for "tied together".
[142] Born Thong Duang (1737-1802), he assumed the royal title of "Buddha Yodfa Chulaloke" and was posthumously titled "Rama I". He was the first king of the present Chakri Dynasty and first to appoint a *Sangha-Raja* (literally the 'Raj of the Religious Community' or Supreme Patriarch of Thai Buddhism). Rama I also moved Siam's capital from Thonburi to Bangkok and built the famous *Wat Pra Kaew* housing the Emerald Buddha, which he captured from Vientianne, Laos.
[143] Thai: *maha-pari-nippan*, that is, to die without coming back.
[144] Maha-Gasapa was one of the first five disciples of Buddha and one of three Gasapa brothers who converted from Hinduism to Buddhism. Maha-Gasapa means the "Great Gasapa". Mahayana Buddhism claims that Maha-Gasapa reincarnated as Ji-Gong, the meat-loving, wine-bibbing Chinese monk. In Chinese Taoism, Ji-Gong is given the status of a god from Heaven and is worshipped as Daoji. Whether Maha-Gasapa reincarnated as Ji-Gong or Daoji, it would truly be a demotion from Buddhahood and a contradiction to Buddhist teaching. If anyone after Buddha achieved Buddhahood, it is assumed that at least the first five disciples of Buddha would have. If they did not, then it is unlikely that anyone since could ever hope to escape karma!
[145] There are major discrepancies in dates relating to Buddhist events. I opted to pick most dates from www.wikipedia.com simply because I am not interested in debating dates.
[146] Literally, Prince or King Naresuan (1555-1605). He is a famous hero in Thai history and recent movies made about him have added to his fame among Thais.
[147] http://www.letusreason.org/Buddh7.htm [148] In university level science classes, which I took, it was always drummed into us at every opportunity that the earth is millions of years old. One obvious problem with that is the math – the total human population was only 1 billion in 1804, 500 million in 1600, 200 million at the birth of Christ (1AD). Even if we allowed 0.5% growth per year (near extinction level), working backwards, we would only get to a few people around 5000 years ago (the time of Noah's Flood). If humans have existed for millions of years, where are all the prehistoric human bones? Our modern cities should be built on human bones.
Henry Morris wrote, "It begins to be glaringly evident that the human race cannot be very old! The traditional Biblical chronology is infinitely more realistic than the million—year history of mankind assumed by the evolutionist." (www.ldolphin.org/morris.html) For more articles by scientists who challenge

the conventional anti-Biblical assumptions, search keywords in www.answersingenesis.org or www.creationontheweb.org.
[149] A virgin giving birth was once perceived as fanciful myth. Now we know it's possible through IVF (in-vitro-fertilization). God's technology was simply in advance of ours.
[150] To authenticate His arrival on earth, God preceded it with 4000 years of prophecies, announcing ahead of time how He would come in very specific details: Genesis 3:15, Proverbs 30:4, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6, Micah 5:2, Malachi 3:1, Matthew 1:23.
[151] Thai: *tamnai.*
[152] Sanskrit: *dharma*; Pali: *tamma*.
[153] Matthew 10:21, 24:10, Luke 21:16
[154] Pali-Sanskrit: *panya-dtagk-charn* or *pa-ti-sampi-tayarn.*
[155] Thai: *ho hern dern agad.*
[156] Thai: *wai roobp, ter phee.*
[157] Pali-Sanskrit: *micha-thi-ti*, or seeing wrong as right, *e.g.* worshipping idols, spirits, ghosts, demons.
[158] If Buddha were correct, then we are less than 500 years away. However, students of the Bible expect the Return of Christ much sooner, based on observing prophecies fulfilled in Israel & the Middle East.
[159] Thai: *fai—bunlai-gun.*
[160] For more understanding of Biblical prophecies on End Times, visit www.discover.org.au/catalog for: a 3 hour CD series on the first chapters of Revelation, called *7 Letters to 7 Churches* a 15 hour CD series, called *End Times*.
[161] Psalm 102:25-26, Isaiah 51:6, Hebrews 1:10-11
[162] Spontaneous generation has never been observed. It is pure fiction.
[163] Darwin did not come up with the idea of evolution, but probably borrowed it from his grandfather Erasmus Darwin, who published primitive ideas of the Big Bang and evolution in the 1790s. As for natural selection, some researchers believe Charles Darwin plagiarized it from Edward Blyth, who proposed it in the 1830s. For more information, see http://www.creationontheweb.com/content/view/387
[164] *Farang* is a general term for white foreigners. It originally referred to the French and came from the word "francais," which Thais pronounce *farangced*.
[165] Alan Johnson, *Wrapping the Good News for the Thai*, p. 16, http://agts.edu/syllabi/ce/summer2002/mthm639oleson_sum02_np_r3.pdf [166] Roy Reinhold calculated Jesus' birthday to be exactly on September 11 3 BC, which is significant for at least two reasons: 1) That day 'happened' to be the 1st of *Tishri*, the first day of the Jewish civil (original) calendar, 2) Satan 'happened' to send his terrorists to attack the Twin Towers in New York on the same day, thereby trying to desecrate the memory of a Day of Hope into a day of terrorism. See: *Paganism in Christmas*, http://members.aol.com/prophecy04/Articles/Christianity/christmas.html, and *Exact Date of Yeshua's Birth*, http://members.aol.com/prophecy04/Articles/Yeshua/yeshuabirth1.html [167] Alan Johnson, *Wrapping the Good News for the Thai*, p.4 http://agts.edu/syllabi/ce/summer2002/mthm639oleson_sum02_np_r3.pdf
[168] To watch or listen to more of my teachings on different religions and cults, please type search at www.discover.org.au/catalog.
[169] Ravi Zacharias, *The Lotus & the Cross*, Multnomah Publishers, Oregon, p. 81.
[170] Matthew 10:28, Luke 8:50, Luke 12:32
[171] Thai: *lud pon jag baab* or to be free from sin!
[172] Thai: *saiyasaad.*
[173] *Wat* means "temple" in Thai. *Wat-prasing* is a common name for many temples in Chiangmai.
[174] It is unclear when and why the Tai people came to Thailand. One tradition has it that they were fleeing the invasion of Genghis Khan (1162-1227), shortly after which Sukhothai (central Thai kingdom) was founded in 1238 and Lannathai (northern Thai kingdom) in 1292. The kingdom of Ayutthaya conquered Sukothai in 1350. Then Ayutthaya invaded the Khmer Empire in 1350, overthrowing Angkor and causing the Khmers to move their capital to its present day Phnom Penh.

[175] Thais actually received Theravada influence from both sides: from the Khmer in the east, and from the Burmese in the west. The Burmese conquered Lannathai in 1558 and destroyed Ayutthaya in 1767. King Taksin then relocated the Thai capital to Thonburi and drove the Burmese out of central Thailand in 1768 and out of Chiang Mai (capital of Lannathai) in 1776. Evidently letting success get to his head, Taksin declared himself a divine person (*sotapanna*), so his people rebelled and his commander executed him in 1782. In the same year, the commander moved his capital to Bang-Koh (Village Island). Although Thais call now call their capital Krung Thep, Westerners still know it by its older name Bangkok. The commander became Pra Ramathibodi or Rama I, the first king of the present Chakri dynasty.

[176] When Thai monks "write blessings" (*long yan*) at the entrance of a new house or on the roof of a new taxi, or "tattoo blessings" (*long sak*) on people's bodies or boxers' arms, they still write the Pali words in *Mon-Khmer* or *Khom* script, not Thai. The most senior monks still learn both *Khom* and *Pali*. One of my Buddhist friends had a father who invited a senior abbot to *long yan* on his brand new car. Within 2 months, his second eldest son crashed his car and died at the tender age of 21. The son's best friend was a young policeman who loved his friend very much and asked for the deceased's motorcycle as a memorial. Within one month, he had a motorcycle accident and died, leaving his newly-wed wife a widow. Rather than blaming the practice of *long yan*, Thais will only seek a better monk with a bigger reputation to *long yan*. If only they knew that Jesus is the Living God who can protect them, these written blessings would have no meaning to them.